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THE

PARENT'S ASSISTANT;

OR,

STORIES FOR CHILDREN.

497

BY

MARIA EDGEWORTH.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

CONTAINING

THE BIRTH-DAY PRESENT,

SIMPLE SUSAN.

A NEW EDITION.

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THE BIRTH-DAY PRESENT.

"MAMMA," said Rosamond, after a long silence, "do you know what I have been thinking of all this time?"

"No, my dear.—What?"

"Why, mamma, about my cousin Bell's birth-day; do you know what day it is?"

"No, I don't remember."

"Dear mother! don't you remember it's the 22d of December; and her birth-day is the day after to-morrow?—Don't you recollect now? But you never remember about birth-days, mamma: that was just what I was thinking of, that you never remember my sister Laura's birth-day, or—or—or *mine*, mamma."

"What do you mean, my dear? I remember your birth-day perfectly well."

"Indeed! but you never *keep* it, though."

"What do you mean by keeping your birth-day?"

"Oh, mamma, you know very well —as Bell's birth-day is kept.—In the first place there is a great dinner."

"And can Bell eat more upon her birth-day than upon any other day?"

"No; nor I should not mind about the dinner, except the mince pies. But Bell has a great many nice things; I don't mean nice eatable things, but nice new playthings given to her always on her birth-day; and every body drinks her health, and she's so happy!"

"But stay, Rosamond, how you jumble things together! Is it every

body's drinking her health, that makes her so happy; or the new playthings, or the nice mince pies? I can easily believe, that she is happy whilst she is eating a mince pie, or whilst she is playing; but how does every body's drinking her health at dinner make her happy?"

Rosamond paused, and then said she did not know. "But," added she, "the *nice new* playthings, mother!"

"But why the nice new playthings? Do you like them only because they are *new?*

"Not *only*—I do not like playthings *only* because they are new, but Bell *does*, I believe—for that puts me in mind—Do you know, mother, she had a great drawerfull of *old* playthings that she never used, and she said that they were good for nothing, because they were *old;* but

I thought many of them were good for a great deal more than the new ones.—Now you shall be judge, mamma; I'll tell you all that was in the drawer."

"Nay, Rosamond, thank you, not just now; I have not time to listen to you."

"Well, then, mamma, the day after to-morrow I can show you the drawer: I want you to be judge very much, because I am sure I was in the right.—And, mother," added Rosamond, stopping her as she was going out of the room, "will you—not now, but when you've time—will you tell me why you never keep my birth day—why you never make any difference between that day and any other day?"

"And will you, Rosamond—not now, but when you have time to think about it—tell me why I should make any dif-

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ference between your birth-day and any other day?"

Rosamond thought—but she could not find out any reason: besides, she suddenly recollected, that she had not time to think any longer, for there was a certain work-basket to be finished, which she was making for her cousin Bell, as a present upon her birth-day. The work was at a stand for want of some filigree paper, and as her mother was going out she asked her to take her with her, that she might buy some. Her sister Laura went with them.

"Sister," said Rosamond, as they were walking along, "what have you done with your half-guinea?"

"I have it in my pocket.

"Dear! you will keep it for ever in your pocket: you know my godmother, when she gave it to you, said you would

keep it longer than I should keep mine; and I know what she thought by her look at the time. I heard her say something to my mother."

"Yes," said Laura, smiling, "she whispered so loud, that I could not help hearing her too: she said I was a little miser."

"But did not you hear her say that I was very *generous*? and she'll see that she was not mistaken. I hope she'll be by when I give my basket to Bell—won't it be beautiful?—there is to be a wreath of myrtle, you know, round the handle, and a frost ground, and then the medallions——"

"Stay," interrupted her sister; for Rosamond, anticipating the glories of her work-basket, talked and walked so fast, that she had passed, without perceiving it, the shop where the filigree

paper was to be bought. They turned back. Now it happened that the shop was the corner house of a street, and one of the windows looked out into a narrow lane: a coach full of ladies stopped at the door just before they went in, so that no one had time immediately to think of Rosamond and her filigree paper, and she went to the window, where she saw, that her sister Laura was looking earnestly at something that was passing in the lane.

Opposite to the window, at the door of a poor-looking house, there was sitting a little girl weaving lace. Her bobbins moved as quick as lightning, and she never once looked up from her work.

"Is not she very industrious?" said Laura: "and very honest too," added she in a minute afterwards; for just then,

a baker with a basket of rolls on his head passed, and by accident one of the rolls fell close to the little girl: she took it up eagerly, looked at it as if she was very hungry, then put aside her work, and ran after the baker to return it to him.

Whilst she was gone, a footman in a livery laced with silver, who belonged to the coach that stood at the shop door, as he was lounging with one of his companions, chanced to spy the weaving-pillow, which she had left upon a stone before the door. To divert himself (for idle people do mischief often to divert themselves) he took up the pillow, and entangled all the bobbins. The little girl came back out of breath to her work; but what was her surprise and sorrow to find it spoiled: she twisted and untwisted, placed and replaced the

bobbins, while the footman stood laughing at her distress. She got up gently, and was retiring into the house, when the silver-laced footman stopped her, saying insolently—"Sit still, child."

"I must go to my mother, sir," said the child; "besides, you have spoiled all my lace—I can't stay."

"Can't you," said the brutal footman, snatching her weaving-pillow again, "I'll teach you to complain of me." And he broke off, one after another, all the bobbins, put them into his pocket, rolled her weaving-pillow down the dirty lane, then jumped up behind his mistress's coach, and was out of sight in an instant.

"Poor girl!" exclaimed Rosamond, no longer able to restrain her indignation at this injustice: "Poor little girl!"

At this instant her mother said to Rosamond—"Come now, my dear, if you want this filigree paper, buy it."

"Yes, madam," said Rosamond; and the idea of what her godmother and her cousin Bell would think of her generosity rushed again upon her imagination. All her feelings of pity were immediately suppressed. Satisfied with bestowing another exclamation upon the "*Poor little girl!*" she went to spend her half-guinea upon her filigree basket. In the mean time, she that was called the "*little miser*," beckoned to the poor girl, and opening the window said, pointing to the cushion, "Is it quite spoiled?"

"Quite! quite spoiled! and I ca 't, nor mother neither, buy another; and I can't do any thing else for my bread." —A few, but very few, tears fell as she said this.

"How much would another cost?" said Laura.

"Oh, a great—*great* deal."

"More than that?" said Laura, holding up her half-guinea.

"Oh, no."

"Then you can buy another with that," said Laura, dropping the half-guinea into her hand, and she shut the window before the child could find words to thank her; but not before she saw a look of joy and gratitude, which gave Laura more pleasure probably than all the praise which could have been bestowed upon her generosity.

Late on the morning of her cousin's birth-day, Rosamond finished her work-basket. The carriage was at the door—Laura came running to call her; her father's voice was heard at the same instant; so she was obliged to go down

with her basket but half wrapped up in silver paper, a circumstance at which she was a good deal disconcerted; for the pleasure of surprising Bell would be utterly lost, if one bit of the filigree should peep out before the proper time. As the carriage went on, Rosamond pulled the paper to one side and to the other, and by each of the four corners.

"It will never do, my dear," said her father, who had been watching her operations, "I am afraid you will never make a sheet of paper cover a box which is twice as large as itself."

"It is not a box, father," said Rosamond, a little peevishly; "it's a basket."

"Let us look at this basket," said he, taking it out of her unwilling hands; for she knew of what frail materials it was made, and she dreaded its com-

ing to pieces under her father's examination.

He took hold of the handle rather roughly; and starting off the coach-seat, she cried—

"Oh, sir! father! sir! you will spoil it indeed!" said she, with increased vehemence, when, after drawing aside the veil of silver-paper, she saw him grasp the myrtle-wreathed handle.

"Indeed, sir, you will spoil the poor handle!"

"But what is the use of *the poor handle*," said her father, "if we are not to take hold of it? And pray," continued he, turning the basket round with his finger and thumb, rather in a disrespectful manner—" pray is this the thing you have been about all this week? I have seen you all this week dabbling with paste and rags; I could not con-

ceive what you were about—Is this the thing?"

"Yes, sir.—You think then that I have wasted my time, because the basket is of no use: but then it is for a present for my cousin Bell."

"Your cousin Bell will be very much obliged to you for a present that is of no use: you had better have given her the purple jar."*

"Oh, father! I thought you had forgotten that—it was two years ago; I'm not so silly now. But Bell will like the basket I know, though it is of no use."

"Then you think Bell is sillier *now*, than you were two years ago.—Well, perhaps that is true; but how comes it, Rosamond, now that you are so wise, that you are fond of such a silly person?"

* See Early Lessons, published by J. Johnson.

"*I*, father?" said Rosamond, hesitating; "I don't think I am *very* fond of her."

"I did not say *very* fond."

"Well, but I don't think I am at all fond of her."

"But you have spent a whole week in making this thing for her."

"Yes, and all my half-guinea besides."

"Yet you think her silly, and you are not fond of her at all; and you say you know this thing will be of no use to her."

"But it is her birth-day, sir; and I am sure she will *expect* something, and every body else will give her something."

"Then your reason for giving is because she expects you to give her something. And will you, or can you, or should you always give, merely be-

cause others *expect*, or because somebody else gives?"

"Always!—no, not always."

"Oh, only on birth-days."

Rosamond, laughing, "Now you are making a joke of me, papa, I see; but I thought you liked that people should be generous—my godmother said that she did."

"So do I, full as well as your godmother; but we have not yet quite settled what it is to be generous."

"Why, is it not generous to make presents?" said Rosamond.

"That is a question, which it would take up a great deal of time to answer. But, for instance, to make a present of a thing that you know can be of no use, to a person you neither love nor esteem, because it is her birth-day, and because every body gives her something,

and because she expects something, and because your godmother says she likes that people should be generous, seems to me, my dear Rosamond, to be, since I must say it, rather more like folly than generosity."

Rosamond looked down upon the basket, and was silent.

"Then I am a fool! am I?" said she, looking up at last.

"Because you have made *one* mistake?—No. If you have sense enough to see your own mistakes, and can afterwards avoid them, you will never be a fool."

Here the carriage stopped, and Rosamond recollected that the basket was uncovered.

Now we must observe, that Rosamond's father had not been too severe upon Bell, when he called her a silly girl.

From her infancy she had been humoured; and at eight years old she had the misfortune to be a spoiled child: she was idle, fretful, and selfish, so that nothing could make her happy. On her birth-day she expected, however, to be perfectly happy. Every body in the house tried to please her, and they succeeded so well, that between breakfast and dinner she had only six fits of crying. The cause of five of these fits no one could discover; but the last, and most lamentable, was occasioned by a disappointment about a worked muslin frock, and accordingly at dressing-time, her maid brought it to her, exclaiming—"See here, miss! what your mamma has sent you on your birth-day—Here's a frock fit for a queen—if it had but lace round the cuffs."

"And why has not it lace around the cuffs?—mamma said it should."

"Yes, but mistress was disappointed about the lace; it is not come home."

"Not come home, indeed! and didn't they know it was my birth-day? But then I say I won't wear it without the lace—I can't wear it without the lace—and I won't."

The lace, however, could not be had; and Bell at length submitted to let the frock be put on. "Come, Miss Bell, dry your eyes," said the maid who *educated* her; "dry your eyes, and I'll tell you something that will please you."

"What, then?" said the child, pouting and sobbing.

"Why——but you must not tell that I told you."

"No—but if I am asked?"

"Why, if you are asked, you must tell the truth to be sure.—So I'll hold my tongue, miss."

"Nay, tell me though, and I'll never tell if I *am* asked."

"Well, then," said the maid, "your cousin Rosamond is come, and has brought you the most *beautifullest* thing you ever saw in your life; but you are not to know any thing about it till after dinner, because she wants to surprise you; and mistress has put it into her wardrobe till after dinner."

"Till after dinner!" repeated Bell, impatiently; "I can't wait till then, I must see it this minute."

The maid refused her several times, till Bell burst into another fit of crying, and the maid fearing that her mistress would be angry with *her*, if Bell's eyes

were red at dinner-time, consented to show her the basket.

"How pretty!—But let me have it in my own hands," said Bell, as the maid held the basket up out of her reach.

"Oh no, you must not touch it; for if you should spoil it, what would become of me?"

"Become of you indeed!" exclaimed the spoiled child, who never considered any thing but her own immediate gratification—"Become of *you*, indeed! what signifies that—I sha'n't spoil it; and I will have it in my own hands.—If you don't hold it down for me directly, I'll tell that you showed it to me."

"Then you won't snatch it?"

"No, no, I won't indeed," said Bell; but she had learned from her maid a

total disregard of truth.—She snatched the basket the moment it was within her reach; a struggle ensued, in which the handle and lid were torn off, and one of the medallions crushed inwards, before the little fury returned to her senses. Calmed at this sight, the next question was, how she should conceal the mischief which she had done. After many attempts, the handle and lid were replaced, the basket was put exactly in the same spot in which it had stood before, and the maid charged the child, "*to look as if nothing was the matter*."

We hope that both children and parents will here pause for a moment to reflect. The habits of tyranny, meanness, and falsehood, which children acquire from living with bad servants, are scarcely ever conquered

in the whole course of their future lives.

After shutting up the basket they left the room, and in the adjoining passage they found a poor girl waiting with a small parcel in her hand.

"What's your business?" said the maid.

"I have brought home the lace, madam, that was bespoke for the young lady."

"Oh, you have, have you, at last?" said Bell; "and pray why didn't you bring it sooner?"

The girl was going to answer, but the maid interrupted her, saying, "Come, come, none of your excuses; you are a little, idle, good-for-nothing thing, to disappoint Miss Bell upon her birthday. But now you have brought it, let us look at it?" The little girl

gave the lace without reply, and the maid desired her to go about her business, and not to expect to be paid; for that her mistress could not see any body, *becaise* she was in a room full of company.

"May I call again, madam, this afternoon?" said the child, timidly.

"Lord bless my stars!" replied the maid, "what makes people so poor, I *wonders!* I wish mistress would buy her lace at the warehouse, as I told her, and not of these folks.—Call again! yes, to be sure—I believe you'd call, call, call, twenty times for two-pence."

However ungraciously the permission to call again was granted, it was received with gratitude: the little girl departed with a cheerful countenance: and Bell teased her maid till she got

her to sew the long-wished-for lace upon her cuffs.

Unfortunate Bell!—All dinner-time passed, and people were so hungry, so busy, or so stupid, that not an eye observed her favourite piece of finery; till at length she was no longer able to conceal her impatience, and turning to Laura, who sat next to her, she said—"You have no lace upon your cuffs; look how beautiful mine is!—Is not it? Don't you wish your mamma could afford to give you some like it?—But you can't get any if she would, for this was made on purpose for me on my birthday, and nobody can get a bit more any where, if they would give the world for it."

"But cannot the person who made it," said Laura, "make any more like it?"

"No, no, no!" cried Bell; for she had already learned, either from her maid or her mother, the mean pride, which values things not for being really pretty or useful, but for being such as nobody else can procure.

"Nobody can get any like it, I say," repeated Bell; "nobody in all London can make it but one person, and that person will never make a bit for any body but me, I am sure—mamma won't let her, if I ask her not."

"Very well," said Laura, coolly, "I do not want any of it; you need not be so violent: I assure you that I don't want any of it."

"Yes, but you do, though," said Bell, more angrily.

"No, indeed," said Laura, smiling.

"You do in the bottom of your heart; but you say you don't to plague me, I

know," cried Bell, swelling with disappointed vanity.—' It is pretty for all that, and it cost a great deal of money too, and nobody shall have any like it, if they cried their eyes out."

Laura received this sentence in silence. —Rosamond smiled. And at her smile, the ill-suppressed rage of the spoiled child burst forth into the seventh and loudest fit of crying which had been heard upon her birth-day.

"What's the matter, my pet?" cried her mother: "come to me, and tell me what's the matter."

Bell ran roaring to her mother; but no otherwise explained the cause of her sorrow than by tearing the fine lace, with frantic gestures, from her cuffs, and throwing the fragments into her mother's lap.

"Oh! the lace, child!—are you mad?" said her mother, catching hold of both her hands. "Your beautiful lace, my dear love—do you know how much it cost?"

"I don't care how much it cost—it is not beautiful, and I'll have none of it," replied Bell, sobbing—"for it is not beautiful."

"But it is beautiful," retorted her mother; I chose the pattern myself. Who has put it into your head, child, to dislike it?—Was it Nancy?"

"No, not Nancy, but *them*, mamma," said Bell, pointing to Laura and Rosamond.

"Oh fie! don't *point*," said her mother, putting down her stubborn finger; "nor say *them*, like Nancy; I am sure you misunderstood.—Miss

Laura, I am sure, did not mean any such thing."

"No, madam; and I did not say any such thing, that I recollect," said Laura, gently.

"Oh no, indeed!" cried Rosamond, warmly rising in her sister's defence. But no defence or explanation was to be heard, for every body had now gathered round Bell, to dry her tears, and to comfort her for the mischief she had done to her own cuffs.

They succeeded so well, that in about a quarter of an hour the young lady's eyes, and the reddened arches over her eyebrows, came to their natural colour; and the business being thus happily hushed up, the mother, as a reward to her daughter for her good humour, begged that Rosamond would now be so good as to produce her "charming present."

Rosamond, followed by all the company, amongst whom, to her great joy, was her godmother, proceeded to the dressing-room.

"Now I am sure," thought she, "Bell will be surprised, and my godmother will see she was right about my generosity."

The doors of the wardrobe were opened with due ceremony, and the filigree basket appeared in all its glory.

"Well, this is a charming present indeed!" said the godmother, who was one of the company; "*My* Rosamond knows how to make presents." And as she spoke she took hold of the basket, to lift it down to the admiring audience. Scarcely had she touched it, when, lo! the myrtle wreath, the medallions, all dropped—the basket fell to the ground, and only the handle remained in her hand.

All eyes were fixed upon the wreck. Exclamations of sorrow were heard in various tones; and "Who can have done this?" was all that Rosamond could say. Bell stood in sullen silence, which she obstinately preserved in the midst of the inquiries which were made about the disaster. At length, the servants were summoned, and amongst them Nancy, Miss Bell's maid and governess: she affected much surprise, when she saw what had befallen the basket, and declared that she knew nothing of the matter, but that she had seen her mistress in the morning put it quite safe into the wardrobe; and that, for her part, she had never touched it, or thought of touching it, in her born days—"Nor Miss Bell neither, ma'am, I can answer for her; for she never knew of its being there, because

I never so much as mentioned it to her, that there was such a thing in the house, because I knew Miss Rosamond wanted to surprise her with the secret—so I never mentioned a sentence of it—Did I, Miss Bell?"

Bell, putting on the deceitful look which her maid had taught her, answered boldly, *No;* but she had hold of Rosamond's hand, and at the instant she uttered this falsehood she squeezed it terribly.

"Why do you squeeze my hand so?" said Rosamond, in a low voice; "what are you afraid of?"

"Afraid of!" cried Bell, turning angrily; "I'm not afraid of any thing—I've nothing to be afraid about."

"Nay, I did not say you had," whispered Rosamond; "but only if you did by accident—You know what I

mean—I should not be angry if you did —Only say so."

"I say I did not!" cried Bell, furiously; "Mamma!—Mamma!—Nancy! my cousin Rosamond won't believe me! that's very hard—it's very rude! and I won't bear it—I won't."

"Don't be angry, love—don't;" said the maid.

"Nobody suspects you, darling;" said her mother.——"But she has too much sensibility.——Don't cry, love, nobody suspected you."

"But you know," continued she, turning to the maid, "somebody must have done this, and I must know how it was done; Miss Rosamond's charming present must not be spoiled in this way, in my house, without my taking proper notice of it.——I assure you I am very angry about it, Rosamond."

Rosamond did not rejoice in her anger, and had nearly made a sad mistake, by speaking loud her thoughts—"*I was very foolish*——" she began, and stopped.

"Ma'am," cried the maid, suddenly, "I'll venture to say I know who did it."

"Who?" said every one eagerly.

"Who?" said Bell, trembling.

"Why, miss, don't you recollect that little girl with the lace, that we saw peeping about in the passage: I'm sure she must have done it, for here she was by herself half an hour or more, and not another creature has been in mistress's dressing-room, to my certain knowledge, since morning. Those sort of people have so much curiosity, I'm sure she must have been meddling with it," added the maid.

"Oh yes, that's the thing," said the mistress, decidedly.——"Well, Miss Rosamond, for your comfort, she shall never come into my house again."

"O, that would not comfort me at all," said Rosamond; "besides, we are not sure that she did it; and if——" A single knock at the door was heard at this instant: it was the little girl, who came to be paid for her lace.

"Call her in," said the lady of the house; "let us see her directly."

The maid, who was afraid that the girl's innocence would appear if she were produced, hesitated; but upon her mistress's repeating her commands, she was forced to obey.

The child came in with a look of simplicity; but when she saw the room full of company she was a little abashed.

Rosamond and Laura looked at her and at one another with surprise; for it was the same little girl whom they had seen weaving lace.

"Is not it she?" whispered Rosamond to her sister.

"Yes it is; but hush," said Laura, "she does not know us.—Don't say a word, let us hear what she will say." Laura got behind the rest of the company as she spoke, so that the little girl could not see her.

"Vastly well!" said Bell's mother; "I am waiting to see how long you will have the assurance to stand there with that innocent look. Did you ever see that basket before?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the girl.

"*Yes, ma'am,*" cried the maid, "and what else do you know about it?—You had better confess it at once, and mistress perhaps will say no more about it."

"Yes, do confess it;" added Bell, earnestly.

"Confess what, madam?" said the little girl; "I never touched the basket, madam."

"You never *touched* it; but you confess," interrupted Bell's mother, "that you *did see* it before.—And pray how came you to see it? you must have opened my wardrobe."

"No indeed, ma'am," said the little girl; "but I was waiting in the passage, ma'am, and this door was partly open; and," looking at the maid, "you know, I could not help seeing it."

"Why how could you see it through the doors of my wardrobe?" rejoined the lady.

The maid, frightened, pulled the little girl by the sleeve.

"Answer me," said the lady; "where did you see this basket?"

Another stronger pull.

"I saw it, madam, in her hands," looking at the maid; "and——"

"Well, and what became of it afterwards?"

"Ma'am," hesitating, "miss pulled, and by accident——I believe, I saw, ma'am——miss, you know what I saw."

"I do not know—I do not know: and if I did, you had no business there—and mamma won't believe you, I am sure."

But every body else did, and their eyes were fixed upon Bell in a manner which made her feel rather ashamed.

"What do you all look at me so for?—Why do you all look so?—And am I to be shamed upon my birth-day?"

cried she, bursting into a roar of passion; "and all for this nasty thing!" added she, pushing away the remains of the basket, and looking angrily at Rosamond.

"Bell! Bell! oh fie! fie! now I *am* ashamed of you—that's quite rude to your cousin," said her mother, who was more shocked at her daughter's want of politeness than at her falsehood. "Take her away, Nancy, till she has done crying," added she to the maid, who accordingly carried off her pupil.

Rosamond, during this scene, especially at the moment when her present was pushed away with such disdain, had been making reflections upon the nature of true generosity. A smile from her father, who stood by, a silent spectator of the catastrophe of the filigree basket, gave rise to these reflections; nor were they entirely dissipated by the condo-

lence of the rest of the company, nor even by the praises of her godmother, who to console her said—" Well, my dear Rosamond, I admire your generous spirit. You know I prophesied that your half-guinea would be gone the soonest—Did I not, Laura?" said she, appealing in a sarcastic tone to where she thought Laura was.—" Where is Laura? I don't see her."

Laura came forward.

" You are too *prudent* to throw away your money like your sister; your half-guinea, I'll answer for it, is snug in your pocket—Is it not?"

" No, madam," answered she in a low voice. But low as the voice was, the poor little lace-girl heard it; and now, for the first time, fixing her eyes upon Laura, recollected her benefactress.

" Oh, that's the young lady!" she

exclaimed, in a tone of joyful gratitude —"the good!—good young lady, who gave me the half-guinea, and would not stay to be thanked for it—but I *will* thank her now."

"The half-guinea, Laura!" said her godmother——"What is all this?"

"I'll tell you, madam, if you please," said the little girl.

It was not in expectation of being praised for it, that Laura had been generous, and therefore every body was really touched with the history of the weaving-pillow; and whilst they praised, felt a certain degree of respect, which is not always felt by those who pour forth eulogiums. *Respect* is not an improper word, even applied to a child of Laura's age; for let the age or situation of the person be what it may, they command respect who deserve it.

"Ah, madam!" said Rosamond to her godmother, "now you see—you see she is *not* a little miser: I'm sure that's better than wasting half-a-guinea upon a filigree basket—Is it not, ma'am?" said she, with an eagerness which showed that she had forgotten all her own misfortunes in sympathy with her sister. —"This is being *really generous*, father, is it not?"

"Yes, Rosamond," said her father, and he kissed her—"this *is* being really generous. It is not only by giving away money that we can show generosity, it is by giving up to others any thing that we like ourselves: and therefore," added he, smiling, "it is really generous of you to give your sister the thing you like best of all others."

"The thing I like the best of all others, father!" said Rosamond, half

pleased, half vexed; "what is that I wonder?—You don't mean *praise*, do you, sir?"

"Nay, you must decide that, Rosamond."

"Why, sir," said she, ingenuously, "perhaps it *was* ONCE the thing I liked best; but the pleasure I have just felt, makes me like something else better."

SIMPLE SUSAN.

CHAPTER I.

"Waked, as her custom was, before the day,
"To do the observance due to sprightly May."

DRYDEN.

In a retired hamlet on the borders of Wales, between Oswestry and Shrewsbury, it is still the custom to celebrate the first of May.—The children of the village, who look forward to this rural festival with joyful eagerness, usually meet on the last day of April to make up their nosegays for the morning, and to choose their Queen.—Their customary place of meeting is at a hawthorn, which

stands in a little green nook, open on one side to a shady lane, and separated on the other side by a thick sweet-brier and hawthorn hedge from the garden of an attorney.

This attorney began the world with —nothing—but he contrived to scrape together a good deal of money, every body knew how.—He built a new house at the entrance of the village, and had a large well-fenced garden; yet, notwithstanding his fences, he never felt himself secure; such were his litigious habits and his suspicious temper, that he was constantly at variance with his simple and peaceable neighbours. Some pig, or dog, or goat, or goose, was for ever trespassing:—his complaints and his extortions wearied and alarmed the whole hamlet.—The paths in his fields were at length unfrequented,—his stiles were

blocked up with stones or stuffed with brambles and briers, so that not a gosling could creep under, or a giant get over them—and so careful were even the village children of giving offence to this irritable man of the law, that they would not venture to fly a kite near his fields, lest it should entangle in his trees, or fall upon his meadow.

Mr. Case, for this was the name of our attorney, had a son and a daughter, to whose education he had not time to attend, as his whole soul was intent upon accumulating for them a fortune. —For several years he suffered his children to run wild in the village, but suddenly, upon his being appointed to a considerable agency, he began to think of making his children a little genteel. He sent his son to learn Latin; he hired a maid to wait upon his daughter Bar-

bara, and he strictly forbade her *thenceforward* to keep company with any of the poor children, who had hitherto been her playfellows:—they were not sorry for this prohibition, because she had been their tyrant rather than their companion: she was vexed to observe, that her absence was not regretted, and she was mortified to perceive, that she could not humble them by any display of airs and finery.

There was one poor girl amongst her former associates, to whom she had a peculiar dislike—Susan Price—a sweet-tempered, modest, sprightly, industrious lass, who was the pride and delight of the village. Her father rented a small farm, and, unfortunately for him, he lived near—Attorney Case.—Barbara used often to sit at her window watching Susan at work—sometimes she saw

her in the neat garden raking the beds or weeding the borders; sometimes she was kneeling at her bee-hive with fresh flowers for her bees;—sometimes she was in the poultry-yard scattering corn from her sieve amongst the eager chickens; and in the evening she was often seated in a little honey-suckle arbour, with a clean, light, three-legged deal table before her, upon which she put her plain-work.—Susan had been taught to work neatly by her good mother, who was very fond of her, and to whom she was most gratefully attached. — Mrs. Price was an intelligent, active, domestic woman, but her health was not robust; she earned money, however, by taking in plain-work, and she was famous for baking excellent bread and breakfast-cakes. She was respected in the village for her conduct as a wife and as a mother,

and all were eager to show her attention.—At her door the first branch of hawthorn was always placed on May-morning, and her Susan was usually Queen of the May.

It was now time to choose the Queen. —The setting sun shone full upon the pink blossoms of the hawthorn, when the merry group assembled upon their little green.—Barbara was now walking in sullen state in her father's garden; she heard the busy voices in the lane, and she concealed herself behind the high hedge, that she might listen to their conversation.

"Where's Susan?"—were the first unwelcome words which she overheard. ——"Aye, where's Susan?" repeated Philip, stopping short in the middle of a new tune, that he was playing on his pipe,—"I wish Susan would come! I

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want her to sing me this same tune over again; I have not it yet."

"And I wish Susan would come, I'm sure," cried a little girl, whose lap was full of primroses—"Susan will give me some thread to tie up my nosegays, and she'll show me where the fresh violets grow, and she has promised to give me a great bunch of her double cowslips to wear to-morrow.—I wish she would come.

"Nothing can be done without Susan!—She always shows us where the nicest flowers are to be found in the lanes and meadows," said they.—"She must make up the garlands—and she shall be Queen of the May!" exclaimed a multitude of little voices.

"But she does not come!" said Philip.

Rose, who was her particular friend,

now came forward, to assure the impatient assembly, "that she would answer for it Susan would come as soon as she possibly could, and that she probably was detained by business at home."— The little electors thought, that all business should give way to theirs, and Rose was dispatched to summon her friend immediately.

"Tell her to make haste," cried Philip—"Attorney Case dined at the Abbey to-day—luckily for us; if he comes home, and finds us here, maybe he'll drive us away, for he says this bit of ground belongs to his garden; though that is not true, I'm sure, for Farmer Price knows, and says, it was always open to the road.—The attorney wants to get our play-ground, so he does—I wish he and his daughter Bab, or Miss Barbara, as she must now be

called, were a hundred miles off, out of our way, I know.—No later than yesterday she threw down my nine-pins in one of her ill humours, as she was walking by with her gown all trailing in the dust."

"Yes," cried Mary, the little primrose-girl, "her gown is always trailing, she does not hold it up nicely, like Susan; and with all her fine clothes she never looks half so neat.—Mamma says, she wishes I may be like Susan, when I grow up to be a great girl, and so do I.—I should not like to look conceited as Barbara does, if I was ever so rich."

"Rich or poor," said Philip, "it does not become a girl to look conceited, much less *bold*, as Barbara did the other day, when she was standing at her father's door, without a hat upon

her head, staring at the strange gentleman who stopped hereabout to let his horse drink.—I know what he thought of Bab by his looks, and of Susan too — for Susan was in her garden, bending down a branch of the laburnum-tree, looking at its yellow flowers, which were just come out; and when the gentleman asked her how many miles it was from Shrewsbury, she answered him so modest!—not bashful, like as if she had never seen nobody before — but just right — and then she pulled on her straw hat, which was fallen back with her looking up at the laburnum, and she went her ways home, and the gentleman says to me, after she was gone, "Pray, who is that neat modest girl?"

"But I wish Susan would come," cried Philip, interrupting himself.

Susan was all this time, as her friend Rose rightly guessed, busy at home.—She was detained by her father's returning later than usual—his supper was ready for him nearly an hour before he came home, and Susan swept up the ashes twice, and twice put on wood to make a cheerful blaze for him; but at last, when he did come in, he took no notice of the blaze nor of Susan, and when his wife asked him how he did, he made no answer, but stood with his back to the fire, looking very gloomy. —Susan put his supper upon the table, and set his own chair for him, but he pushed away the chair, and turned from the table, saying—

"I shall eat nothing, child! why have you such a fire, to roast me at this time of the year?"

"You said yesterday, father, I thought,

that you liked a little cheerful wood-fire in the evening, and there was a great shower of hail; your coat is quite wet, we must dry it."

"Take it then, child," said he, pulling it off—"I shall soon have no coat to dry—and take my hat too," said he, throwing it upon the ground.

Susan hung up his hat, put his coat over the back of a chair to dry, and then stood anxiously looking at her mother, who was not well; she had this day fatigued herself with baking, and now, alarmed by her husband's moody behaviour, she sat down pale and trembling.—He threw himself into a chair, folded his arms, and fixed his eyes upon the fire—Susan was the first who ventured to break silence.—Happy the father who has such a daughter as Susan!—her unaltered sweetness of tem-

per, and her playful affectionate caresses, at last somewhat dissipated her father's melancholy;—he could not be prevailed upon to eat any of the supper which had been prepared for him; however, with a faint smile, he told Susan, that he thought he could eat one of her Guinea-hen's eggs. She thanked him, and with that nimble alacrity which marks the desire to please, she ran to her neat chicken-yard!—but, alas! her Guinea-hen was not there!—it had strayed into the attorney's garden—she saw it through the paling, and timidly opening the little gate, she asked Miss Barbara, who was walking slowly by, to let her come in and take her Guinea-hen.—Barbara, who was at this instant reflecting, with no agreeable feelings, upon the conversation of the village children, to which she had recently

listened, started when she heard Susan's voice, and with a proud, ill-humoured look and voice refused her request.—"Shut the gate," said she, "you have no business in *our* garden, and as for your hen I shall keep it, it is always flying in here, and plaguing us, and my father says it is a trespasser, and he told me I might catch it, and keep it the next time it got in, and it is in now." Then Barbara called to her maid Betty, and bid her catch the mischievous hen.

"Oh my Guinea-hen! my pretty Guinea-hen!" cried Susan, as they hunted the frighted, screaming creature from corner to corner.

"Here we have got it!" said Betty, holding it fast by the legs.

"Now pay damages, Queen Susan, or good-by to your pretty Guinea-hen!" said Barbara, in an insulting tone.

"Damages! what damages?" said Susan; "tell me what I must pay?"

"A shilling," said Barbara.

"Oh, if sixpence would do!" said Susan; "I have but sixpence of my own in the world, and here it is."

"It won't do," said Barbara, turning her back.

"Nay, but hear me," cried Susan; "let me at least come in to look for its eggs. I only want *one* for my father's supper; you shall have all the rest."

"What's your father or his supper to us; is he so nice that he can eat none but Guinea-hen's eggs?" said Barbara: "if you want your hen and your eggs, pay for them, and you'll have them."

"I have but sixpence, and you say that won't do," said Susan, with a sigh, as she looked at her favourite, which

was in the maid's grasping hands, struggling and screaming in vain.

Susan retired disconsolate. At the door of her father's cottage she saw her friend Rose, who was just come to summon her to the hawthorn bush.

"They are all at the hawthorn, and I'm come for you, we can do nothing without *you*, dear Susan," cried Rose, running to meet her, at the moment she saw her; "you are chosen Queen of the May—come, make haste; but what's the matter, why do you look so sad?"

"Ah!" said Susan, "don't wait for me, I can't come to you; but," added she, pointing to the tuft of double cowslips in the garden, "gather those for poor little Mary; I promised them to her; and tell her the violets are under the hedge just opposite the turnstile.

on the right as we go to church. Good by, never mind me—I can't come—I can't stay, for my father wants me."

"But don't turn away your face, I won't keep you a moment, only tell me what's the matter," said her friend, following her into the cottage.

"Oh, nothing, not much," said Susan; "only that I wanted the egg in a great hurry for father, it would not have vexed me—to be sure I should have clipped my Guinea-hen's wings, and then she could not have flown over the hedge— but let us think no more about it now," added she, twinkling away a tear.

When Rose, however, learned that her friend's Guinea hen was detained prisoner by the attorney's daughter, she exclaimed with all the honest warmth

of indignation, and instantly ran back to tell the story to her companions.

"Barbara! aye! like father like daughter," cried Farmer Price, starting from the thoughtful attitude in which he had been fixed, and drawing his chair closer to his wife.

"You see something is amiss with me, wife—I'll tell you what it is." As he lowered his voice, Susan, who was not sure that he wished she should hear what he was going to say, retired from behind his chair.—"Susan, don't go; sit you down here, my sweet Susan," said he, making room for her upon his chair; "I believe I was a little cross when I came in first to-night, but I had something to vex me, as you shall hear."

"About a fortnight ago, you know, wife," continued he, "there was a bal-

lotting in our town for the militia; now at that time I wanted but ten days of forty years of age, and the attorney told me, I was a fool for not calling myself plump forty; but the truth is the truth, and it is what I think fittest to be spoken at all times, come what will of it—so I was drawn for a militia-man; but when I thought how loath you and I would be to part, I was main glad to hear that I could get off by paying eight or nine guineas for a substitute; only I had not the nine guineas, for you know we had bad luck with our sheep this year, and they died away one after another; but that was no excuse, so I went to Attorney Case, and with a power of difficulty I got him to lend me the money, for which, to be sure, I gave him something, and left my lease of our farm with him, as he insisted

upon it, by way of security for the loan. Attorney Case is too many for me; he has found what he calls a *flaw* in my lease, and the lease he tells me is not worth a farthing, and that he can turn us all out of our farm to-morrow if he pleases; and sure enough he will please, for I have thwarted him this day, and he swears he'll be revenged of me; indeed he has begun with me badly enough already.—I'm not come to the worst part of my story yet——"

Here Farmer Price made a dead stop, and his wife and Susan looked up in his face breathless with anxiety.

"It must come out," said he, with a short sigh; "I must leave you in three days, wife."

"Must you!" said his wife in a faint resigned voice—"Susan, love, open the window."

Susan ran to open the window, and then returned to support her mother's head.

When she came a little to herself, she sat up, begged that her husband would go on, and that nothing might be concealed from her.

Her husband had no wish indeed to conceal any thing from a wife he loved so well; but stout as he was, and steady to his maxim, that the truth was the thing the fittest to be spoken at all times, his voice faltered, and it was with some difficulty that he brought himself to speak the whole truth at this moment.

The fact was this: Case met Farmer Price as he was coming home whistling, from a new-ploughed field; the attorney had just dined at *the Abbey*—the Abbey was the family-seat of an opulent

baronet in the neighbourhood, to whom Mr. Case had been agent; the Baronet died suddenly, and his estate and title devolved to a younger brother, who was now just arrived in the country, and to whom Mr. Case was eager to pay his court, in hopes of obtaining his favour. Of the agency he flattered himself that he was pretty secure, and he thought that he might assume the tone of command towards the tenants, especially towards one who was some guineas in debt, and in whose lease there was a flaw.

Accosting the Farmer in a haughty manner, the Attorney began with, "So, Farmer Price, a word with you, if you please; walk on here, man, beside my horse, and you'll hear me.—You have changed your opinion, I hope, about that bit of land, that corner at the end of my garden."

"As how, Mr. Case?" said the Farmer.

"As how, man—why you said something about its not belonging to me, when you heard me talk of enclosing it the other day."

"So I did," said Price, "and so I do."

Provoked and astonished at the firm tone in which these words were pronounced, the attorney was upon the point of swearing, that he would have his revenge; but as his passions were habitually attentive to the *letter* of the law, he refrained from any hasty expression, which might, he was aware, in a court of justice, be hereafter brought against him.

"My good friend, Mr. Price," said he, in a soft voice, and pale with suppressed rage—he forced a smile—"I'm

under the necessity of calling in the money I lent you some time ago, and you will please to take notice, that it must be paid to-morrow morning. I wish you a good evening. You have the money ready for me, I dare say."

"No," said the Farmer, "not a guinea of it; but John Simpson, who was my substitute, has not left our village yet, I'll get the money back from him, and go myself, if so be it must be so, into the militia—so I will."

The attorney did not expect such a determination, and he represented in a friendly hypocritical tone to Price, "that he had no wish to drive him to such an extremity, that it would be the height of folly in him *to run his head against a wall for no purpose.* You don't mean to take the corner into your own garden, do you, Price?" said he.

"I," said the Farmer, "it's none of mine; I never take what does not belong to me."

"True, right, very proper, of course," said Mr. Case; "but then you have no interest in life in the land in question?"

"None."

"Then why so stiff about it, Price? all I want of you is to say——"

"To say that black is white, which I won't do, Mr. Case; the ground is a thing not worth talking of, but it's neither yours nor mine; in my memory, since the *new* lane was made, it has always been open to the parish, and no man shall enclose it with my good will.—Truth is truth, and must be spoken; justice is justice, and should be done, Mr. Attorney."

"And law is law, Mr. Farmer, and shall have its course, to your cost," cried the

attorney, exasperated by the dauntless spirit of this village Hampden.

Here they parted.—The glow of enthusiasm, the pride of virtue, which made our hero brave, could not render him insensible. As he drew nearer home many melancholy thoughts pressed upon his heart; he passed the door of his own cottage with resolute steps, however, and went through the village in search of the man who had engaged to be his substitute. He found him, told him how the matter stood; and luckily the man, who had not yet spent the money, was willing to return it, as there were many others had been drawn for the militia, who, he observed, would be glad to give him the same price, or more, for his services.

The moment Price got the money, he hastened to Mr. Case's house, walked

straight forward into his room, and laying the money down upon his desk, "There, Mr. Attorney, are your nine guineas; count them; now I have done with you."

"Not yet," said the attorney, jingling the money triumphantly in his hand; "we'll give you a taste of the law, my good sir, or I'm mistaken.—You forgot the flaw in your lease, which I have safe in this desk."

"Ah, my lease!" said the Farmer, who had almost forgot to ask for it till he was thus put in mind of it by the attorney's imprudent threat—

"Give me my lease, Mr. Case; I've paid my money, you have no right to keep the lease any longer, whether it is a bad one or a good one."

"Pardon me," said the attorney, locking his desk, and putting the key

into his pocket, "possession, my honest friend," cried he, striking his hand upon the desk, "possession is nine points of the law. Good night to you. I cannot in conscience return a lease to a tenant in which I know there is a capital flaw; it is my duty to show it to my employer, or, in other words, to your new landlord, whose agent I have good reasons to expect I shall be. You will live to repent your obstinacy, Mr. Price. Your servant, sir."

Price retired melancholy, but not intimidated.

Many a man returns home with a gloomy countenance, who has not quite so much cause for vexation.

When Susan heard her father's story, she quite forgot her Guinea-hen, and her whole soul was intent upon her poor mother, who, notwithstanding her ut-

most exertion, could not support herself under this sudden stroke of misfortune.—In the middle of the night Susan was called up; her mother's fever ran high for some hours, but towards morning it abated, and she fell into a soft sleep with Susan's hand locked fast in hers.

Susan sat motionless, and breathed softly, lest she should disturb her. The rush-light, which stood beside the bed, was now burnt low, the long shadow of the tall wicker chair flitted, faded, appeared, and vanished, as the flame rose and sunk in the socket. Susan was afraid that the disagreeable smell might waken her mother, and, gently disengaging her hand, she went on tiptoe to extinguish the candle—all was silent; the grey light of the morning was now spreading over every object; the sun

rose slowly, and Susan stood at the lattice-window, looking through the small leaded cross-barred panes at the splendid spectacle. A few birds began to chirp, but as Susan was listening to them, her mother started in her sleep, and spoke unintelligibly.—Susan hung up a white apron before the window to keep out the light, and just then she heard the sound of music at a distance in the village. As it approached nearer, she knew that it was Philip playing upon his pipe and tabor; she distinguished the merry voices of her companions, "carolling in honour of the May," and soon she saw them coming towards her father's cottage, with branches and garlands in their hands. She opened quick, but gently, the latch of the door, and ran out to meet them.

"Here she is!—Here's Susan!" they

exclaimed joyfully, "Here's the Queen of the May." "And here's her crown!" cried Rose, pressing forward; but Susan put her finger upon her lips, and pointed to her mother's window—Philip's pipe stopped instantly.

"Thank you," said Susan; "my mother is ill, I can't leave her, you know." Then gently putting aside the crown, her companions bid her say who should wear it for her.

"Will you, dear Rose?" said she, placing the garland upon her friend's head—"It's a charming May morning," added she, with a smile; "good by. We sha'n't hear your voices or the pipe when you have turned the corner into the village, so you need only stop till then, Philip."

"I shall stop for all day," said Philip; "I've no mind to play any more."

"Good by, poor Susan; it is a pity you can't come with us," said all the children; and little Mary ran after Susan to the cottage door.

"I forgot to thank you," said she, "for the double cowslips; look how pretty they are, and smell how sweet the violets are in my bosom, and kiss me quick, for I shall be left behind!"

Susan kissed the little breathless girl, and returned softly to the side of her mother's bed.

"How grateful that child is to me for a cowslip only! How can I be grateful enough to such a mother as this?" said Susan to herself, as she bent over her sleeping mother's pale countenance.

Her mother's unfinished knitting lay upon a table near the bed, and Susan sat down in her wicker arm-chair, and

went on with the row, in the middle of which her hand stopped the preceding evening.

"She taught me to knit, she taught me every thing that I know," thought Susan; "and, best of all, she taught me to love her, to wish to be like her."

Her mother, when she awakened, felt much refreshed by her tranquil sleep, and observing that it was a delightful morning, said "that she had been dreaming she heard music, but that the drum frightened her, because she thought it was the signal for her husband to be carried away by a whole regiment of soldiers, who had pointed their bayonets at him. But that was but a dream, Susan: I awakened, and knew it was a dream, and I then fell asleep, and have slept soundly ever since."

How painful it is to waken to the re-

membrance of misfortune!—Gradually as this poor woman collected her scattered thoughts, she recalled the circumstances of the preceding evening; she was too certain, that she had heard from her husband's own lips the words, *I must leave you in three days*, and she wished that she could sleep again, and think it all a dream.

"But he'll want, he'll want a hundred things," said she, starting up; "I must get his linen ready for him. I'm afraid it's very late; Susan, why did you let me lie so long?"

"Every thing shall be ready, dear mother, only don't hurry yourself," said Susan.

And indeed her mother was ill able to bear any hurry, or to do any work this day.

Susan's affectionate, dexterous, sen-

sible activity was never more wanted, or more effectual. She understood so readily, she obeyed so exactly, and, when she was left to her own discretion, judged so prudently, that her mother had little trouble and no anxiety in directing her; she said that Susan never did too little, or too much.

Susan was mending her father's linen, when Rose tapped softly at the window, and beckoned to her to come out; she went out.

"How does your mother do, in the first place?" said Rose.

"Better, thank you."

"That's well, and I have a little bit of good news for you besides—here," said she, pulling out a glove, in which there was money, "we'll get the Guinea-hen back again—we have all agreed about it. This is the money that has

been given to us in the village this May morning; at every door they gave silver —see how generous they have been; twelve shillings, I assure you. Now we are a match for Miss Barbara. You won't like to leave home.—I'll go to Barbara, and you shall see your Guinea-hen in ten minutes."

Rose hurried away, pleased with her commission, and eager to accomplish her business.

Miss Barbara's maid, Betty, was the first person that was visible at the attorney's house.

Rose insisted upon seeing Miss Barbara herself, and she was shown into a parlour to the young lady, who was reading a dirty novel, which she put under a heap of law papers as they entered.

"Dear, how you *startled* me! is it

only you?" said she to her maid; but as soon as she saw Rose behind the maid, she put on a scornful air.

"Could not ye say I was not at home, Betty?—Well, my good girl, what brings you here? something to borrow or beg, I suppose."

May every ambassador—every ambassador in as good a cause, answer with as much dignity and moderation as Rose replied to Barbara upon the present occasion!

She assured her, that the person from whom she came did not send her either to beg or borrow, that she was able to pay the full value of that for which she came to ask; and producing her well-filled purse, "I believe that this is a very good shilling," said she; "if you don't like it I will change it; and now you will be so good as to give

me Susan's Guinea-hen; it is in her name I ask for it."

"No matter in whose name you ask for it," replied Barbara, "you will not have it—take up your shilling, if you please.—I would have taken a shilling yesterday, if it had been paid at the time properly; but I told Susan, that if it was not paid then, I should keep the hen, and so I shall, I promise her.—You may go back, and tell her so."

The attorney's daughter had, whilst Rose opened her negotiation, measured the depth of her purse with a keen eye, and her penetration discovered that it contained at least ten shillings; with proper management she had some hopes that the Guinea-hen might be made to bring in at least half the money.

Rose, who was of a warm temper, not quite so fit a match as she had

thought herself for the wily Barbara, incautiously exclaimed, "Whatever it costs us, we are determined to have Susan's favourite hen; so if one shilling won't do, take two, and if two won't do, why take three."

The shillings sounded provokingly upon the table, as she threw them down one after another, and Barbara coolly replied, "Three won't do."

"Have you no conscience, Miss Barbara? then take four."

Barbara shook her head. A fifth shilling was instantly proffered—but Bab, who now saw plainly that she had the game in her own hands, preserved a cold cruel silence.

Rose went on rapidly, bidding shilling after shilling, till she had completely emptied her purse.

The twelve shillings were spread upon

the table—Barbara's avarice was moved, she consented for this ransom to liberate her prisoner.

Rose pushed the money towards her, but just then recollecting that she was acting for others more than for herself, and doubting whether she had full powers to conclude such an extravagant bargain, she gathered up the public treasure, and with newly-recovered prudence observed, that she must go back to consult her friends.

Her generous little friends were amazed at Barbara's meanness, but with one accord declared, that they were most willing, for their parts, to give up every farthing of the money. They all went to Susan in a body, and told her so.

"There's our purse," said they, "do what you please with it."

They would not wait for one w

of thanks, but ran away, leaving only Rose with her to settle the treaty for the Guinea-hen.

There is a certain manner of accepting a favour, which shows true generosity of mind. Many know how to give, but few know how to accept a gift properly.

Susan was touched, but not astonished, by the kindness of her young friends, and she received the purse with as much simplicity as she would have given it.

"Well," said Rose, "shall I go back for the Guinea-hen?"

"The Guinea-hen!" said Susan, starting from a reverie into which she had fallen as she contemplated the purse, "certainly I *do* long to see my pretty Guinea-hen once more, but I was not thinking of her just then—I was thinking of my father."

Now Susan had heard her mother often in the course of this day wish that she had but money enough in the world to pay John Simpson for going to serve in the militia instead of her husband. "This to be sure will go but a little way," thought Susan, "but still it may be of some use to my father." She told her mind to Rose, and concluded by saying decidedly, that "if the money was given to her to dispose of as she pleased, she would give it to her father."

"It is all yours, my dear good Susan," cried Rose, with a look of warm approbation; "this is so like you!—But I'm sorry that Miss Bab must keep your Guinea-hen. I would not be her for all the Guinea-hens, or guineas either, in the whole world. Well, I'll answer for it the Guinea-hen won't

make her happy, and you'll be happy even without—because you are good.—Let me come and help you to-morrow," continued she, looking at Susan's work. "If you have any more mending-work to do—I never liked work till I worked with you—I won't forget my thimble or my scissors," added she, laughing,—"though I used to forget them when I was a giddy girl. I assure you I am a great hand at my needle now—try me."

Susan assured her friend that she did not doubt the powers of her needle, and that she would most willingly accept of her services, but that, *unluckily*, she had finished all the needle-work that was immediately wanted.

"What do you know," said she, "I shall have a great deal of business to-morrow—but I won't tell you what it

is that I have to do, for I am afraid I shall not succeed; but if I do succeed, I'll come and tell you directly, because you will be so glad of it."

Susan, who had always been attentive to what her mother taught her, and who had often assisted her when she was baking bread and cakes for the family at the Abbey, had now formed the courageous, but not presumptuous idea, that she could herself undertake to bake a batch of bread.—One of the servants from the Abbey had been sent all round the village in the morning, in search of bread, and had not been able to procure any that was tolerable. Mrs. Price's last baking failed for want of good barm, she was not now strong enough to attempt another herself; and when the brewer's boy came with eagerness to tell her that he had some fine

fresh yest for her, she thanked him, but sighed, and said it would be of no use to her, she was too ill for the work. Susan modestly requested permission to try her hand, and her mother would not refuse her.* Accordingly she went to work with much prudent care, and when her bread the next morning came out of the oven it was excellent—at least her mother said so, and she was a good judge. It was sent to the Abbey, and as the family there had not tasted any good bread since their arrival in the country, they also were earnest and warm in its praise. Inquiries were made from the housekeeper, and they heard, with some surprise, that this excellent bread was made by a young girl of twelve years old. The house-

* This circumstance is founded on fact.

keeper, who had known Susan from a child, was pleased to have an opportunity of speaking in her favour.

"She is the most industrious little creature, ma'am, in the world," said she to her mistress; "little I can so well call her now, since she's grown tall and slender to look at; and glad I am she is grown up likely to look at, for handsome is that handsome does—and she thinks no more of her being handsome than I do myself—yet she has as proper a respect for herself, ma'am, as you have; and I always see her neat, and with her mother, ma'am, or fit people, as a girl should be; as for her mother, she doats upon her, as well she may, for I should myself if I had half such a daughter; and then she has two little brothers, and she's as good to them, and my boy Philip says, taught 'em

read more than the school-mistress, all with tenderness and good-nature; but I beg your pardon, ma'am, I cannot stop myself when I once begin to talk of Susan."

"You have really said enough to excite my curiosity," said her mistress; "pray send for her immediately; we can see her before we go out to walk."

The benevolent housekeeper dispatched her boy Philip for Susan. Susan was never in such an *untidy* state, that she could not obey such a summons without a long preparation. She had, it is true, been very busy, but orderly people can be busy and neat at the same time. She put on her usual straw hat, and accompanied Rose's mother, who was going with a basket of cleared muslin to the Abbey.

The modest simplicity of Susan's appearance, and the artless good sense and

propriety of the answers she gave to all the questions that were asked her, pleased the ladies at the Abbey, who were good judges of characters and manners.

Sir Arthur Somers had two sisters, sensible, benevolent women; they were not of that race of fine ladies, who are miserable the moment they come to *the country*; nor yet were they of that bustling sort, who quack and direct all their poor neighbours, for the mere love of managing, or the want of something to do. They were judiciously generous, and whilst they wished to diffuse happiness, they were not peremptory in requiring that people should be happy precisely their own way. With these dispositions, and with a well-informed brother, who, though he never wished to direct, was always willing to assist in their efforts to do good, there were rea-

sonable hopes, that these ladies would be a blessing to the poor villagers amongst whom they were now settled.

As soon as Miss Somers had spoken to Susan, she inquired for her brother; but Sir Arthur was in his study, and a gentleman was with him on business.

Susan was desirous of returning to her mother, and the ladies therefore would not detain her. Miss Somers told her with a smile, when she took leave, that she would call upon her in the evening at six o'clock.

It was impossible that such a grand event as Susan's visit to the Abbey could long remain unknown to Barbara Case and her gossiping maid. They watched eagerly for the moment of her return, that they might satisfy their curiosity.

"There she is, I declare, just come into her garden," cried Bab. "I'll run

in and get it all out of her, in a minute."

Bab could descend, without shame, whenever it suited her purposes, from the height of insolent pride to the lowest meanness of fawning familiarity.

Susan was gathering some marigolds and some parsley for her mother's broth.

"So, Susan," said Bab, who came close up to her before she perceived it, "how goes the world with you to-day?"

"My mother is rather better to-day, she says, ma'am—thank you," replied Susan, coldly but civilly.

"*Ma'am*, dear, how polite we are grown of a sudden!" cried Bab, winking at her maid.—"One may see you've been in good company this morning—Hey, Susan—come, let's hear about it?"—"Did you see the ladies themselves

or was it only the housekeeper sent for you?" said the maid.

"What room did you go into?" continued Bab: "Did you see Miss Somers, or Sir Arthur?"

"Miss Somers."

"La, she saw Miss Somers! Betty, I must hear about it. Can't you stop gathering those things for a minute, and chat a bit with us, Susan?"

"I can't stay, indeed, Miss Barbara, for my mother's broth is just wanted, and I'm in a hurry." Susan ran home.

"Lord, her head is full of broth now," said Bab to her maid, "and she has not a word for herself, though she has been abroad. My papa may well call her *Simple Susan*—for simple she is, and simple she will be all the world over; for my part I think she's little better than a downright simpleton; but

however, simple or not, I'll get what I want out of her; she'll be able to speak, may be, when she has settled the grand matter of the broth. I'll step in and ask to see her mother, that will put her in a good humour in a trice."

Barbara followed Susan into the cottage, and found her occupied with the grand affair of the broth.

"Is it ready?" said Bab, peeping into the pot that was over the fire; "dear, how savory it smells! I'll wait till you go in with it to your mother, for I must ask her how she does myself."

"Will you please to sit down, then, miss?" said Simple Susan, with a smile, for at this instant she forgot the Guinea-hen. "I have but just put the parsley into the broth, but it will soon be ready."

During this interval Bab employed herself much to her own satisfaction, in

cross-questioning Susan. She was rather provoked indeed that she could not learn exactly how each of the ladies was dressed, and what there was to be for dinner at the Abbey; and she was curious beyond measure to find out what Miss Somers meant, by saying that she would call at Mr. Price's cottage at six o'clock in the evening.—"What do you think she could mean?"

"I thought she meant what she said," replied Susan, "that she would come here at six o'clock."

"Aye, that's as plain as a pike-staff," said Barbara; "but what else did she mean, think you? People, you know, don't always mean exactly, downright, neither more nor less than they say."

"Not always," said Susan, with an arch smile, which convinced Barbara that she was not quite a simpleton.

"*Not always*," repeated Barbara, colouring;—"Oh then I suppose you have some guess at what Miss Somers meant."

"No," said Susan, "I was not thinking about Miss Somers, when I said not always."

"How nice that broth does look!" resumed Barbara, after a pause.

Susan had now poured the broth into a basin, and as she strewed over it the bright orange-marigolds, it looked very tempting; she tasted it, and added now a little salt, and now a little more, till she thought it was just to her mother's taste.

"Oh, *I* must taste it," said Bab, taking the basin up greedily.

"Won't you take a spoon?" said Susan, trembling at the large mouthfuls which Barbara sucked up with a terrible noise.

"Take a spoonful, indeed!" exclaimed Barbara, setting down the basin in high anger.—"The next time I taste your broth you shall affront me, if you dare! The next time I set my foot in this house, you shall be as saucy to me as you please." And she flounced out of the house repeating, "*Take a spoon, pig*, was what you meant to say."

Susan stood in amazement at the beginning of this speech, but the concluding words explained to her the mystery.

Some years before this time, when Susan was a very little girl, and could scarcely speak plain, as she was eating a basin of bread and milk for her supper at the cottage door, a great pig came up, and put his nose into the basin. Susan was willing that the pig

should have some share of the bread and milk, but as she eat with a spoon, and he with his large mouth, she presently discovered that he was likely to have more than his share, and in a simple tone of expostulation she said to him, "Take a *poon*, pig*." The saying became proverbial in the village, Susan's little companions repeated it, and applied it upon many occasions, whenever any one claimed more than his share of any thing good. Barbara, who was then not Miss Barbara, but plain Bab, and who played with all the poor children in the neighbourhood, was often reproved in her unjust methods of division by Susan's proverb. Susan, as she grew up, forgot the childish saying, but the remembrance of it rankled in Barbara's mind, and it was to this that

* This is a true anecdote.

she suspected Susan had alluded, when she recommended a spoon to her whilst she was swallowing the basin of broth.

"La, miss," said Barbara's maid, when she found her mistress in a passion upon her return from Susan's, "I only wondered you did her the honour to set your foot within her doors. What need have you to trouble her for news about the Abbey folks, when your own papa has been there all morning, and is just come in, and can tell you every thing."

Barbara did not know, that her father meant to go to the Abbey that morning, for Attorney Case was mysterious even to his own family about his morning rides. He never chose to be asked where he was going, or where he had been, and this made his servants more than commonly inquisitive to trace him.

Barbara, against whose apparent child-

ishness, and real cunning, he was not sufficiently upon his guard, had often the art of drawing him into conversation about his visits.—She ran into her father's parlour, but she knew, the moment she saw his face, that it was no time to ask questions; his pen was across his mouth, and his brown wig pushed oblique upon his contracted forehead—the wig was always pushed crooked whenever he was in a brown, or rather a black study. Barbara, who did not, like Susan, bear with her father's testy humour from affection and gentleness of disposition, but who always humoured him from artifice, tried all her skill to fathom his thoughts; and when she found that *it* would not do, she went to tell her maid so, and to complain that her father was so cross, there was no bearing him.

It is true, that Attorney Case was not in the happiest mood possible, for he was by no means satisfied with his morning's work at the Abbey. Sir Arthur Somers, the *new man*, did not suit him, and he began to be rather apprehensive, that he should not suit Sir Arthur.—He had sound reasons for his doubts.

Sir Arthur Somers was an excellent lawyer, and a perfectly honest man.—This seemed to our attorney a contradiction in terms;—in the course of his practice the case had not occurred, and he had no precedents ready to direct his proceedings.

Sir Arthur Somers was a man of wit and eloquence, yet of plain-dealing and humanity. The attorney could not persuade himself to believe that the benevolence was any thing but enlightened cunning, and the plain-dealing he one

minute dreaded as the master-piece of art, and the next despised as the characteristic of folly. In short, he had not yet decided whether he was an honest man or a knave.—He had settled accounts with him for his late agency, he had talked about sundry matters of business, he constantly perceived that he could not impose upon Sir Arthur; but, that he could know all the mazes of the law, and yet prefer the straight road, was incomprehensible.

Mr. Case paid him some compliments on his great legal abilities, and his high reputation at the bar.

"I have left the bar," replied Sir Arthur, coolly.

The attorney looked in unfeigned astonishment, when a man was actually making 3000*l*. per annum at the bar, that he should leave it.

"I am come," said he, "to enjoy the kind of domestic life which I prefer to all others—in the country, amongst people whose happiness I hope to increase."

At this speech the attorney changed his ground, flattering himself that he should find his man averse to business, and ignorant of country affairs. He talked of the value of land and of new leases.

Sir Arthur wished to enlarge his domain, to make a ride round it.—A map of the domain was upon the table; Farmer Price's garden came exactly across the new road for the ride. Sir Arthur looked disappointed, and the keen attorney seized the moment to inform him that "Price's whole land was at his disposal."

"At my disposal! how so?" cried Sir Arthur eagerly; it will not be out of lease I believe these ten years. I'll look into the rent-roll again, perhaps I am mistaken."

"You are mistaken, my good sir, and you are not mistaken," said Mr. Case, with a shrewd smile; "the land will not be out of lease these ten years in one sense, and in another it is out of lease at this time being. To come to the point at once, the lease is *ab origine* null and void. I have detected a capital flaw in the body of it; I pledge my credit upon it, sir, it can't stand a single term in law or equity."

The attorney observed, that at these words Sir Arthur's eye was fixed with a look of earnest attention. "Now I have him!" said the cunning tempter to himself.

"Neither in law nor equity?" repeated Sir Arthur, with apparent incredulity—"Are you sure of that, Mr. Case?"

"Sure! As I told you before, sir, I'd pledge my whole credit upon the thing—I'd stake my existence."

"*That's something*," said Sir Arthur, as if he was pondering upon the matter.

The attorney went on with all the eagerness of a keen man, who sees a chance at one stroke of winning a rich friend, and of ruining a poor enemy;—he explained with legal volubility, and technical amplification, the nature of the mistake in Mr. Price's lease. "It was, sir," said he, "a lease for the life of Peter Price, Susanna his wife, and to the survivor or survivors of them, or for the full time and term of twenty years, to be computed from the first day of May then next ensuing.—Now, sir, this you

see is a lease in reversion, which he late Sir Benjamin Somers had not, by his settlement, a right to make. This is a curious mistake, you see, Sir Arthur, and in filling up those printed leases there's always a good chance of some flaw; I find it perpetually, but I never found a better than this in the whole course of my practice."

Sir Arthur stood in silence.

"My dear sir," said the attorney, taking him by the button, "you have no scruple of stirring in this business?"

"A little," said Sir Arthur.

"Why then that can be done away in a moment; your name shall not appear in it at all; you have nothing to do but to make over the lease to me—I make all safe to you with my bond.—Now being in possession, I come forward in my own proper person. *Shall I proceed?*"

"No—you have said enough," replied Sir Arthur.

"The case indeed lies in a nutshell," said the attorney, who had by this time worked himself up to such a pitch of professional enthusiasm, that, intent upon his vision of a lawsuit, he totally forgot toobserve the impression his words made upon Sir Arthur.

"There's only one thing we have forgotten all this time," said Sir Arthur.

"What can that be, sir?"

"That we shall ruin this poor man."

Case was thunderstruck at these words, or rather by the look which accompanied them. He recollected, that he had laid himself open, before he was sure of Sir Arthur's *real* character. He softened, and said he should have had certainly more *consideration* in the case

of any but a litigious pig-headed fellow, as he knew Price to be.

"If he be litigious," said Sir Arthur, "I shall certainly be glad to get him fairly out of the parish as soon as possible. When you go home, you will be so good, sir, as to send me his lease, that I may satisfy myself, before we stir in this business."

The attorney, brightening up, prepared to take leave, but he could not persuade himself to take his departure, without making one push at Sir Arthur about the agency.

"I will not trouble *you*, Sir Arthur, with this lease of Price's," said he; "I'll leave it with your agent.—Whom shall I apply to?"

"*To myself*, sir, if you please," replied Sir Arthur.

The courtiers of Lewis the XIVth

could not have looked more astounded than our attorney, when they received from their monarch a similar answer. It was this unexpected reply of Sir Arthur's which had deranged the temper of Mr. Case, which had caused his wig to stand so crooked upon his forehead, and which rendered him impenetrably silent to his inquisitive daughter Barbara.—After walking up and down his room, conversing with himself for some time, he concluded, that the agency must be given to somebody, when Sir Arthur should go to attend his duty in parliament; that the agency, even for the winter season, was not a thing to be neglected, and that, if he managed well, he might yet secure it for himself.—He had often found that small timely presents worked wonderfully upon his own mind, and he judged of others by himself. The

tenants had been in the reluctant but constant practice of making him continual petty offerings, and he resolved to try the same course with Sir Arthur, whose resolution to be his own agent he thought argued a close, saving, avaricious disposition.

He had heard the housekeeper at the Abbey inquiring, as he passed through the servants, whether there was any lamb to be gotten? She said that Sir Arthur was remarkably fond of lamb, and that she wished she could get a quarter for him.

Immediately he sallied into his kitchen, as soon as the idea struck him, and asked a shepherd, who was waiting there, whether he knew of a nice fat lamb to be had any where in the neighbourhood.

"I know of one," cried Barbara;

"Susan Price has a pet lamb, that's as fat as fat can be."

The attorney eagerly caught at these words, and speedily devised a scheme for obtaining Susan's lamb for nothing. It would be something strange if an attorney of his talents and standing was not an over-match for Simple Susan. He prowled forth in search of his prey; he found Susan packing up her father's little wardrobe, and when she looked up as she knelt, he saw that she had been in tears.

"How is your mother to-day, Susan?"

"Worse, sir.—My father goes to-morrow."

"That's a pity."

"It can't be helped," said Susan, with a sigh.

"It can't be helped—how do you know that?" said he.

"Sir! *dear* sir!" cried she, looking up at him, and a sudden ray of hope beamed in her ingenuous countenance.

"And if you could help it, Susan?"

Susan clasped her hands in silence, more expressive than words.

"You *can* help it, Susan."

She started up in ecstasy.

"What would you give now to have your father at home for a whole week longer?"

"Any thing!—but I have nothing."

"Yes, but you have a lamb," said the hard-hearted attorney.

"My poor little lamb!" said Susan; "but what good can that do?"

"What good can any lamb do?—Is not lamb good to eat? Why do you look so pale, girl? Are not sheep killed every day, and don't you eat mutton? Is your lamb better than any body else's, think you?'

"I don't know, but I love it better."

"More fool you."

"It feeds out of my hand; it follows me about; I have always taken care of it; my mother gave it to me."

"Well, say no more about it then; if you love your lamb better than your father and your mother both, keep it, and good morning to you."

"Stay, oh stay!" cried Susan, catching the skirt of his coat with an eager trembling hand;—"a whole week, did you say? My mother may get better in that time.—No, I do not love my lamb half so well." The struggle of her mind ceased, and with a placid countenance and calm voice, "Take the lamb," said she.

"Where is it?" said the attorney.

"Grazing in the meadow, by the river side.

"It must be brought up before nightfall for the butcher, remember."

"I shall not forget it," said Susan, steadily. But as soon as her persecutor turned his back and quitted the house, she sat down, and hid her face in her hands. She was soon roused by the sound of her mother's feeble voice, who was calling *Susan* from the inner room, where she lay. Susan went in, but did not undraw the curtain as she stood beside the bed.

"Are you there, love?—Undraw the curtain, that I may see you, and tell me—I thought I heard some strange voice just now talking to my child.—Something's amiss, Susan," said her mother, raising herself as well as she was able in the bed, to examine her daughter's countenance.

"Would you think it amiss, then,

my dear mother," said Susan, stooping to kiss her, "would you think it amiss, if my father was to stay with us a week longer."

"Susan! you don't say so?"

"He is indeed, a whole week;—but how burning hot your hand is still."

"Are you sure he will stay? How do you know? Who told you so?—Tell me all quick."

"Attorney Case told me so; he can get him a week's longer leave of absence, and he has promised he will."

"God bless him for it for ever and ever!" said the poor woman, joining her hands. "May the blessing of Heaven be with him!"

Susan closed the curtains and was silent—she *could not say, Amen.*

She was called out of the room at this moment, for a messenger was come

from the Abbey for the bread-bills.—It was she who always made out the bill for though she had not had a great number of lessons from the writing-master she had taken so much pains to learn that she could write a very neat, legible hand, and she found this very useful; she was not, to be sure, particularly inclined to draw out a long bill at this instant, but business must be done. She set to work, ruled her lines for the pounds, shillings, and pence, made out the bill for the Abbey, and dispatched the impatient messenger; then she resolved to make out all the bills for the neighbours who had many of them taken a few loaves and rolls of her baking. "I had better get all my business finished," said she to herself, "before I go down to the meadow to take leave of my poor lamb."—This was sooner said than done;

for she found that she had a great number of bills to write, and the slate on which she had entered the account was not immediately to be found, and when it was found, the figures were almost rubbed out; Barbara had sat down upon it; Susan pored over the number of loaves, and the names of the persons who took them, and she wrote, and cast up sums, and corrected and re-corrected them, till her head grew quite puzzled.

The table was covered with little square bits of paper, on which she had been writing bills over and over again, when her father came in with a bill in his hand.

"How's this, Susan?" said he;—"How can ye be so careless, child? What is your head running upon? Here, look at the bill you were sending up to the Abbey! I met the messenger, and

luckily asked to see how much it was.—Look at it."

Susan looked and blushed; it was written, "Sir Arthur Somers to John Price, debtor six dozen *lambs*, so much." She altered it, and returned it to her father; but he had taken up some of the papers which lay upon the table.—"What are all these, child?"

"Some of them are wrong, and I've written them out again," said Susan.

"Some of them! all of them, I think, seem to be wrong, if I can read," said her father, rather angrily; and he pointed out to her sundry strange mistakes.

Her head indeed had been running upon her poor lamb. She corrected all the mistakes with so much patience, and bore to be blamed with so much good humour, that her father at last said,

that it was impossible ever to scold Susan without being in the wrong at the last.

As soon as all was set right, he took the bills, and said he would go round to the neighbours, and collect the money himself, for that he should be very proud to have it to say to them, that it was all earned by his own little daughter.

Susan resolved to keep the pleasure of telling him of his week's reprieve till he should come home to sup, as he had promised to do, in her mother's room.—She was not sorry to hear him sigh as he passed the knapsack, which she had been packing up for his journey.

"How delighted he will be when he hears the good news!" said she to herself; "but I know he will be a little sorry too for my poor lamb."

As she had now settled all her business, she thought she could have time to go down to the meadow by the river-side to see her favourite; but just as she had tied on her straw-hat the village-clock struck four, and this was the hour at which she always went to fetch her little brothers home from a dame-school near the village. She knew that they would be disappointed if she was later than usual, and she did not like to keep them waiting, because they were very patient good boys; so she put off the visit to her lamb, and went immediately for her brothers.

SIMPLE SUSAN.

CHAPTER II.

"Ev'n in the spring and play-time of the year,
"That calls th' unwonted villager abroad,
"With all her little ones, a sportive train,
"To gather king-cups in the yellow mead,
"And prink their heads with daisies."

COWPER.

THE dame-school, which was about a mile from the hamlet, was not a splendid mansion, but it was reverenced as much by the young race of village-scholars, as if it had been the most stately edifice in the land; it was a low-roofed, long, thatched tenement, sheltered by a few reverend oaks, under which many

generations of hopeful children had in their turn gambolled. The close-shaven green, which sloped down from the hatch-door of the school-room, was paled round with a rude paling, which, though decayed in some parts by time, was not in any place broken by violence. The place bespoke order and peace. The dame who governed here was well obeyed, because she was just; and well beloved, because she was ever glad to give well-earned praise and pleasure to her little subjects.

Susan had once been under her gentle dominion, and had been deservedly her favourite scholar; the dame often cited her as the best example to the succeeding tribe of emulous youngsters.

Susan had scarcely opened the wicket which separated the green before the school-room door from the lane, when

she heard the merry voices of the children, and saw the little troop issuing from the hatchway, and spreading over the green.

"Oh, there's our Susan!" cried her two little brothers, running, leaping, and bounding up to her; and many of the other rosy girls and boys crowded round her, to talk of their plays, for Susan was easily interested in all that made others happy; but she could not make them comprehend, that, if they all spoke at once, it was not possible that she could hear what was said. The voices were still raised one above another, all eager to establish some important observation about nine-pins, or marbles, or tops, or bows and arrows, when suddenly music was heard, unusual music, and the crowd was silenced. The music seemed to be near the spot where

the children were standing, and they looked round to see whence it could come.

Susan pointed to the great oak tree, and they beheld, seated under its shade, an old man playing upon his harp.

The children all approached—at first timidly, for the sounds were solemn, but as the harper heard their little footsteps coming towards him, he changed his hand, and played one of his most lively tunes. The circle closed, and pressed nearer and nearer to him; some who were in the foremost row whispered to each other. "He is blind! What a pity!" and "He looks very poor; what a ragged coat he wears!" said others. "He must be very old, for all his hair is white, and he must have travelled a great way, for his shoes are quite worn out," observed another.

All these remarks were made whilst he was tuning his harp, for when he once more began to play, not a word was uttered. He seemed pleased by their simple exclamations of wonder and delight, and, eager to amuse his young audience, he played now a gay and now a pathetic air, to suit their several humours.

Susan's voice, which was soft and sweet, expressive of gentleness and good-nature, caught his ear the moment she spoke; he turned his face eagerly to the place where she stood, and it was observed, that whenever she said, that she liked any tune particularly, he played it over again.

"I am blind," said the old man, "and cannot see your faces, but I know you all asunder by your voices, and I can guess pretty well at all your humours and characters by your voices."

"Can you so indeed?" cried Susan's little brother William, who had stationed himself between the old man's knees, "Then you heard *my* sister Susan speak just now.—Can you tell us what sort of a person she is?"

"That I can, I think, without being a conjuror," said the old man, lifting the boy up on his knee; "*your* sister Susan is good-natured."

The boy clapped his hands.

"And good-tempered."

"*Right*," said little William, with a louder clap of applause.

"And very fond of the little boy who sits upon my knee."

"O right! right! quite right!" exclaimed the child, and "Quite right!" echoed on all sides.

"But how came you to know so much, when you are blind?" said Wil-

liam, examining the old man attentively.

"Hush," said John, who was a year older than his brother, and very sage, "you should not put him in mind of his being blind."

"Though I am blind," said the harper, "I can hear, you know, and I heard from your sister herself all that I told you of her, that she was good-tempered and good-natured, and fond of you."

"Oh, that's wrong—you did not hear all that from herself, I'm sure," said John, "for nobody ever hears her praising herself."

"Did not I hear her tell you, when you first came round me, that she was in a great hurry to go home, but that she would stay a little while, since you wished it so much—Was not that good-

natured? and when you said you did not like the tune she liked best, she was not angry with you, but said, 'Then, play William's first, if you please.'—Was not that good-tempered?"

"Oh," interrupted William, "it's all true; but how did you find out that she was fond of me?"

"That is such a difficult question," said the harper, "that I must take time to consider."—He tuned his harp as he pondered, or seemed to ponder; and at this instant two boys, who had been searching for bird-nests in the hedges, and who had heard the sound of the harp, came blustering up, and, pushing their way through the circle, one of them exclaimed,

"What's going on here?—Who are you, my old fellow?—A blind harper;

well, play us a tune, if you can play ever a good one—play me—let's see, what shall he play, Bob?" added he, turning to his companion. "Bumper Squire Jones."

The old man, though he did not seem quite pleased with the peremptory manner of the request, played, as he was desired, "Bumper Squire Jones;" and several other tunes were afterwards bespoke by the same rough and tyrannical voice.

The little children shrunk back in timid silence, and eyed the great brutal boy with dislike.

This boy was the son of Attorney Case, and as his father had neglected to correct his temper when he was a child, as he grew up it became insufferable; all who were younger and weaker than him-

self dreaded his approach, and detested him as a tyrant.

When the old harper was so tired, that he could play no more, a lad, who usually carried his harp for him, and who was within call, came up, and held his master's hat to the company, saying, "Will you be pleased to remember us?" The children readily produced their halfpence, and thought their wealth well bestowed upon this poor good-natured man, who had taken so much pains to entertain them, better even than upon the gingerbread woman, whose stall they loved to frequent. The hat was held some time to the attorney's son before he chose to see it; at last he put his hand surlily into his waistcoat pocket, and pulled out a shilling; there were sixpenny-worth of halfpence in the hat, "I'll take these halfpence," said he, "and here's a shilling for you."

"Bless you, sir!" said the lad; but as he took the shilling, which the young gentleman had slily put *into the blind man's hand,* he saw that it was not worth one farthing.

"I am afraid it is not good, sir," said the lad, whose business it was to examine the money for his master.

"I am afraid, then, you'll get no other," said young Case, with an insulting laugh.

"It never will do, sir," persisted the lad, "look at it yourself, the edges are all yellow; you can see the copper through it quite plain; sir, nobody will take it from us."

"That's your affair," said the brutal boy, pushing away his hand; you may pass it, you know, as well as I do, if you look sharp—you have taken it from

me, and I sha'n't take it back again, I promise you."

A whisper of "That's very unjust," was heard.—The little assembly, though under evident constraint, could no longer suppress their indignation.

"Who says it's unjust?" cried the tyrant sternly, looking down upon his judges.

Susan's little brothers had held her gown fast to prevent her from moving at the beginning of this contest, and she was now so much interested to see the end of it, that she stood still, without making any resistance.

"Is any one here amongst yourselves a judge of silver?" said the old man.

"Yes, here's the butcher's boy," said the attorney's son; "show it to him."

He was a sickly-looking boy, and of a remarkably peaceable disposition.

Young Case fancied that he would be afraid to give judgment against him; however, after some moments' hesitation, and after turning the shilling round several times, he pronounced, "that, as far as his judgment went, but he did not pretend to be downright *certain sure* of it, the shilling was not over and above good." Then turning to Susan, to screen himself from manifest danger, for the attorney's son looked upon him with a vengeful mien, "But here's Susan here, who understands silver a great deal better than I do, she takes a power of it for bread you know."

"I'll leave it to her," said the old harper; "if she says the shilling is good, keep it, Jack."

The shilling was handed to Susan, who, though she had with becoming modesty forborne all interference, did not

hesitate, when she was called upon, to speak the truth; "I think that this shilling is a bad one," said she, and the gentle but firm tone in which she pronounced the words, for a moment awed and silenced the angry and brutal boy.

"There's another then," cried he, "I have sixpences and shillings too in plenty, thank my stars."

Susan now walked away with her two little brothers, and all the other children separated to go to their several homes.

The old harper called to Susan, and begged, that, if she was going towards the village, she would be so kind as to show him the way.

His lad took up his harp, and little William took the old man by the hand, "I'll lead him, I can lead him," said he; and John ran on before them, to gather king-cups in the meadow.

There was a small rivulet, which they had to cross, and as the plank which served for a bridge over it was rather narrow, Susan was afraid to trust the old blind man to his little conductor; she therefore went on the tottering plank first herself, and then led the old harper carefully over; they were now come to a gate, which opened upon the high road to the village.

"There is the high road straight before you," said Susan to the lad, who was carrying his master's harp, "you can't miss it; now I must bid you a good evening, for I'm in a great hurry to get home, and must go the short way across the fields here, which would not be so pleasant for you, because of the stiles.—Good bye."

The old harper thanked her, and went along the high road, whilst she

and her brothers tripped on as fast as they could by the short way across the fields.

"Miss Somers, I am afraid, will be waiting for us," said Susan; "you know she said she would call at six, and by the length of our shadows I'm sure it is late."

When they came to their own cottage-door, they heard many voices, and they saw, when they entered, several ladies standing in the kitchen.

"Come in, Susan, we thought you had quite forsaken us," said Miss Somers to Súsan, who advanced timidly. "I fancy you forgot, that we promised to pay you a visit this evening; but you need not blush so much about the matter, there is no great harm done, we have only been here about five minutes, and we have been well employed in admiring

your neat garden, and your orderly shelves. Is it you, Susan, who keep these things in such nice order?" continued Miss Somers, looking round the kitchen.

Before Susan could reply, little William pushed forward, and answered, "Yes, ma'am, it is *my* sister Susan that keeps every thing neat, and she always comes to school for us too, which was what caused her to be so late." "Because as how," continued John, "she was loath to refuse us hearing a blind man play on the harp—it was we kept her, and we hopes, ma'am, as you *are*—as you *seem* so good, you won't take it amiss."

Miss Somers and her sister smiled at the affectionate simplicity with which Susan's little brothers undertook her defence, and they were, from this slight

circumstance, disposed to think yet more favourably of a family, which seemed so well united.

They took Susan along with them through the village; many came to their doors, and, far from envying, all secretly wished Susan well as she passed.

"I fancy we shall find what we want here," said Miss Somers, stopping before a shop, where unfolded sheets of pins and glass buttons glistened in the window, and where rolls of many-coloured ribands appeared ranged in tempting order. She went in, and was rejoiced to see the shelves at the back of the counter well furnished with glossy tiers of stuffs, and gay, neat printed linens and calicoes.

"Now, Susan, choose yourself a gown," said Miss Somers; "you set an example of industry and good conduct,

of which we wish to take public notice, for the benefit of others."

The shopkeeper, who was father to Susan's friend Rose, looked much satisfied by this speech, and as if a compliment had been paid to himself, bowed low to Miss Somers, and then with alertness, which a London linen-draper might have admired, produced piece after piece of his best goods to his young customer — unrolled, unfolded, held the bright stuffs and callendered calicoes in various lights. Now stretched his arm to the highest shelves, and brought down in a trice what seemed to be beyond the reach of any but a giant's arm; now dived into some hidden recess beneath the counter, and brought to light fresh beauties and fresh temptations.

Susan looked on with more indiffer-

ence than most of the spectators.—She was thinking much of her lamb, and more of her father.

Miss Somers had put a bright guinea into her hand, and had bid her pay for her own gown; but Susan, as she looked at the guinea, thought it was a great deal of money to lay out upon herself, and she wished, but did not know how to ask, that she might keep it for a better purpose.

Some people are wholly inattentive to the lesser feelings, and incapable of reading the countenances of those on whom they bestow their bounty.—Miss Somers and her sister were not of this roughly charitable class.

"She does not like any of these things," whispered Miss Somers to her sister.

Her sister observed, that Susan looked

as if her thoughts were far distant from gowns.

"If you don't fancy any of these things," said the civil shopkeeper to Susan, "we shall have a new assortment of calicoes for the spring season soon from town."

"Oh," interrupted Susan, with a smile and a blush, "these are all pretty, and too good for me, but——"

"*But* what, Susan?" said Miss Somers. "Tell us what is passing in your little mind."

Susan hesitated.

"Well then, we will not press you; you are scarcely acquainted with us yet; when you are, you will not be afraid, I hope, to speak your mind.—Put this shining yellow counter," continued she, pointing to the guinea, "in your pocket, and make what use of it you please.

From what we know, and from what we have heard of you, we are persuaded that you will make a good use of it."

"I think, madam," said the master of the shop, with a shrewd good-natured look, "I could give a pretty good guess myself what will become of that guinea —but I say nothing."

"No, that is right," said Miss Somers; "we leave Susan entirely at liberty, and now we will not detain her any longer. Good night, Susan, we shall soon come again to your neat cottage."

Susan courtesied with an expressive look of gratitude, and with a modest frankness in her countenance, which seemed to say, "I would tell you and welcome what I want to do with the guinea—but I am not used to speak before so many people; when you come

to our cottage again you shall know all."

When Susan had departed, Miss Somers turned to the obliging shopkeeper, who was folding up all the things he had opened. "You have had a great deal of trouble with us, sir," said she; "and since Susan will not choose a gown for herself, I must."—She selected the prettiest, and whilst the man was rolling it in paper, she asked him several questions about Susan and her family, which he was delighted to answer, because he had now an opportunity of saying as much as he wished in her praise.

"No later back, ma'am, than last May morning," said he, "as my daughter Rose was telling us, Susan did a turn, in her quiet way, by her mother, that would not displease you if you were to hear it. She was to have been Queen

of the May, ladies, which, in our little village, amongst the younger tribe, is a thing, ladies, that is thought of a good deal—but Susan's mother was ill, and Susan, after sitting up with her all night, would not leave her in the morning, even when they brought the crown to her.—She put the crown upon my daughter Rose's head with her own hands, and to be sure Rose loves her as well as if she was her own sister; but I don't speak from partiality, for I am no relation whatever to the Prices, only a well-wisher, as every one, I believe, who knows them, is.—I'll send the parcel up to the Abbey, shall I, ma'am?"

"If you please," said Miss Somers, "and let us know as soon as you receive your new things from town. You will, I hope, find us good customers, and well-wishers," added she, with a

smile; "for those who wish well to their neighbours, surely deserve to have well-wishers themselves."

A few words may encourage the benevolent passions, and may dispose people to live in peace and happiness;—a few words may set them at variance, and may lead to misery and lawsuits.—Attorney Case and Miss Somers were both equally convinced of this, and their practice was uniformly consistent with their principles.

But now to return to Susan.—She put the bright guinea carefully into the glove, with the twelve shillings which she had received from her companions on May-day. Besides this treasure, she calculated, that the amount of the bills for bread could not be less than eight or nine and thirty shillings, and as her father was now sure of a week's reprieve,

she had great hopes, that, by some means or other, it would be possible to make up the whole sum necessary to pay for a substitute. "If that could but be done," said she to herself, "how happy would my mother be!—She would be quite stout again, for she certainly is a great deal better since morning, since I told her that father would stay a week longer.—Ah! but she would not have blessed Attorney Case though, if she had known about my poor Daisy."

Susan took the path that led to the meadow by the water-side, resolved to go by herself, and take leave of her innocent favourite. But she did not pass by unperceived; her little brothers were watching for her return, and as soon as they saw her, they ran after her, and overtook her as she reached the meadow.

"What did that good lady want with you?" cried William; but looking up in his sister's face, he saw tears in her eyes, and he was silent, and walked on quietly.

Susan saw her lamb by the water-side.

"Who are those two men?" said William. "What are they going to do with *Daisy?*"

The two men were Attorney Case and the butcher.—The butcher was feeling whether the lamb was fat.

Susan sat down upon the bank in silent sorrow;—her little brothers ran up to the butcher, and demanded whether he was going to *do any harm* to the lamb.

The butcher did not answer, but the attorney replied, "It is not your sister's lamb any longer, it's mine—mine to all intents and purposes."

"Yours!" cried the children with terror; "and will you kill it?"

"That's the butcher's business."

The little boys now burst into piercing lamentations; they pushed away the butcher's hand, they threw their arms round the neck of the lamb, they kissed its forehead—it bleated.

"It will not bleat to-morrow!" said William, and he wept bitterly.

The butcher looked aside, and hastily rubbed his eyes with the corner of his blue apron.

The attorney stood unmoved; he pulled up the head of the lamb, which had just stooped to crop a mouthful of clover.—"I have no time to waste," said he; "butcher, you'll account with me. If it's fat—the sooner the better. I've no more to say." And he walked off, deaf to the prayers of the poor children.

As soon as the attorney was out of sight, Susan rose from the bank where she was seated, came up to her lamb, and stooped to gather some of the fresh dewy trefoil, to let it eat out of her hand for the last time.—Poor Daisy licked her well-known hand.

"Now, let us go," said Susan.

"I'll wait as long as you please," said the butcher.

Susan thanked him, but walked away quickly, without looking again at her lamb.

Her little brothers begged the man to stay a few minutes, for they had gathered a handful of blue speedwell and yellow crowsfoot, and they were decking the poor animal.

As it followed the boys through the village, the children collected as they passed, and the butcher's own son was

among the number. Susan's steadiness about the bad shilling was full in this boy's memory, it had saved him a beating; he went directly to his father to beg the life of Susan's lamb.

"I was thinking about it, boy, myself," said the butcher; "it's a sin to kill a *pet lamb*, I'm thinking—any way it's what I'm not used to, and don't fancy doing, and I'll go and say as much to Attorney Case—but he's a hard man; there's but one way to deal with him, and that's the way I must take, though so be I shall be the loser thereby: but we'll say nothing to the boys, for fear it might be the thing would not take, and then it would be worse again to poor Susan, who is a good girl, and always was, as well she may, being of a good breed, and well reared from the first."

"Come, lads, don't keep a crowd

and a scandal about my door," continued he, aloud, to the children; "turn the lamb in here, John, in the paddock, for to-night, and go your ways home."

The crowd dispersed, but murmured, and the butcher went to the attorney. "Seeing that all you want is a good, fat, tender lamb, for a present for Sir Arthur, as you told me," said the butcher, "I could let you have what's as good, and better for your purpose."

"Better—if it's better I'm ready to hear reason."

The butcher had choice, tender lamb, he said, fit to eat the next day; and as Mr. Case was impatient to make his offering to Sir Arthur, he accepted the butcher's proposal, though with such seeming reluctance, that he actually squeezed out of him, before he would

complete the bargain, a bribe of a fine sweetbread.

In the mean time Susan's brothers ran home to tell her, that her lamb was put into the paddock for the night; this was all they knew, and even this was some comfort to her.—Rose, her good friend, was with her, and she had, before her, the pleasure of telling her father of his week's reprieve—her mother was better, and even said she was determined to sit up to supper in her wicker arm-chair.

Susan was getting things ready for supper, when little William, who was standing at the house-door, watching in the dusk for his father's return, suddenly exclaimed, "Susan! if here is not our old man!"

"Yes," said the old harper, "I have found my way to you; the neighbours

were kind enough to show me whereabouts you lived, for though I didn't know your name, they guessed who I meant by what I said of you all."

Susan came to the door, and the old man was delighted to hear her speak again.

"If it would not be too bold," said he, "I'm a stranger in this part of the country, and come from afar off; my boy has got a bed for himself here in the village, but I have no place—could you be so charitable to give an old blind man a night's lodging?"

Susan said she would step and ask her mother, and she soon returned with an answer, that he was heartily welcome, if he could sleep upon the children's bed, which was but small.

The old man thankfully entered the hospitable cottage—he struck his head against the low roof as he stepped over the door-sill.

"Many roofs that are twice as high are not half so good," said he.

Of this he had just had experience at the house of Attorney Case, where he had asked, but had been roughly refused all assistance by Miss Barbara, who was, according to her usual custom, standing staring at the hall-door.

The old man's harp was set down in farmer Price's kitchen, and he promised to play a tune for the boys before they went to bed; their mother giving them leave to sit up to supper with their father.

He came home with a sorrowful countenance; but how soon did it brighten, when Susan, with a smile, said to him, "Father, we've good news for you! good news for us all!—You have a whole week longer to stay with us, and perhaps," continued she, putting her little

purse into his hands, "perhaps with what's here, and the bread-bills, and what may somehow be got together before a week's at an end, we may make up the nine guineas for the substitute, as they call him; who knows, dearest mother, but we may keep him with us for ever?"—As she spoke she threw her arms round her father, who pressed her to his bosom without speaking, for his heart was full. He was some little time before he could perfectly believe, that what he heard was true; but the revived smiles of his wife, the noisy joy of his little boys, and the satisfaction that shone in Susan's countenance, convinced him that he was not in a dream.

As they sat down to supper, the old harper was made welcome to his share of the cheerful, though frugal meal.

Susan's father, as soon as supper was

finished, even before he would let the harper play a tune for his boys, opened the little purse which Susan had given to him; he was surprised at the sight of the twelve shillings, and still more, when he came to the bottom of the purse, to see the bright golden guinea.

"How did you come by all this money, Susan?" said he.

"Honestly and handsomely, that I'm sure of beforehand," said her proud mother; "but how I can't make out, except by the baking. — Hey, Susan, is this your first baking?"

"Oh, no, no," said her father, "I have her first baking snug here, besides, in my pocket. I kept it for a surprise to do your mother's heart good, Susan. Here's twenty-nine shillings; and the Abbey bill, which is not paid yet, comes to ten more.—What think you of this, wife?

Have we not a right to be proud of our Susan?" "Why," continued he, turning to the harper, "I ask your pardon for speaking out so free before strangers in praise of my own, which I know is not mannerly; but the truth is the fittest thing to be spoken, as I think, at all times, therefore here's your good health, Susan;—why, by and by she'll be worth her weight in gold—in silver at least.—But tell us, child, how came you by all these riches? and how comes it that I don't go to-morrow?—All this happy news makes me so gay in myself, I'm afraid I shall hardly understand it rightly. — But speak on, child — first bringing us a bottle of the good mead you made last year from your own honey."

Susan did not much like to tell the history of her Guinea-hen—of the gown—and of her poor lamb—part of this

would seem as if she was vaunting of her own generosity, and part of it she did not like to recollect. But her mother pressed to know the whole, and she related it as simply as she could. When she came to the story of her lamb, her voice faltered, and every body present was touched.—The old harper sighed once, and cleared his throat several times—he then asked for his harp, and, after tuning it for a considerable time, he recollected, for he had often fits of absence, that he sent for it to play the tune he had promised to the boys.

This harper came from a great distance, from the mountains of Wales, to contend with several other competitors for a prize, which had been advertised by a musical society about a year before this time. There was to be a splendid ball given upon the occasion at Shrews-

bury, which was about five miles from our village. The prize was ten guineas for the best performer on the harp, and the prize was now to be decided in a few days.

All this intelligence Barbara had long since gained from her maid, who often went to visit in the town of Shrewsbury, and she had long had her imagination inflamed with the idea of this splendid music-meeting and ball. Often had she sighed to be there, and often had she revolved in her mind schemes for introducing herself to some *genteel* neighbours, who might take her to the ball *in their carriage.*—How rejoiced, how triumphant was she, when this very evening, just about the time when the butcher was bargaining with her father about Susan's lamb, a *livery* servant from the Abbey rapped at the door,

and left a card of invitation for Mr. and Miss Barbara Case!

"There," cried Bab, "*I* and *papa* are to dine and drink tea at the Abbey to-morrow.—Who knows?—I dare say, when they see that I am not a vulgar-looking person, and all that—and if I go cunningly to work with Miss Somers—as I shall—to be sure, I dare say, she'll take me to the ball with her."

"To be sure," said the maid, "it's the least one may expect from a lady that *demeans* herself to visit Susan Price, and goes about a-shopping for her; the least she can do for you, is to take you in her carriage, *which* costs nothing, but is just a common civility, to a ball."

"Then pray, Betty," continued Miss Barbara, "don't forget to-morrow, the

first thing you do, to send off to Shrewsbury for my new bonnet.—I must have it *to dine in*, at the Abbey, or the ladies will think nothing of me—and, Betty, remember the mantua-maker too. I must see and coax papa, to buy me a new gown against the ball. I can see, you know, something of the fashions to-morrow at the Abbey. I shall *look the ladies well over*, I promise you.—And, Betty, I have thought of the most charming present for Miss Somers: as papa says, it's good never to go empty-handed to a great house, I'll make Miss Somers, who is fond, as her maid told you, of such things—I'll make Miss Somers a present of that Guinea-hen of Susan's;—it's of no use to me, so do you carry it up early in the morning to the Abbey, with my compliments.—That's the thing."

In full confidence that her present, and her bonnet, would operate effectually in her favour, Miss Barbara paid her first visit at the Abbey. She expected to see wonders; she was dressed in all the finery which she had heard from her maid, who had heard from the prentice of a Shrewsbury milliner, was *the thing* in London; and she was much surprised and disappointed, when she was shown into the room where the Miss Somerses, and the ladies at the Abbey, were sitting, to see that they did not, in any one part of their dress, agree with the picture her imagination had formed of fashionable ladies. She was embarrassed when she saw books, and work, and drawings, upon the table; and she began to think, that some affront was meant to her, because *the company* did not sit with their hands before them.

When Miss Somers endeavoured to find out conversation that would interest her, and spoke of walks, and flowers, and gardening, of which she was herself fond, Miss Barbara still thought herself undervalued, and soon contrived to expose her ignorance most completely, by talking of things which she did not understand.

Those who never attempt to appear what they are not—those who do not in their manners pretend to any thing unsuited to their habits and situation in life, never are in danger of being laughed at by sensible, well-bred people of any rank; but affectation is the constant and just object of ridicule.

Miss Barbara Case, with her mistaken airs of gentility, aiming to be thought a woman, and a fine lady, whilst she was in reality a child, and a vulgar attorney's

daughter, rendered herself so thoroughly ridiculous, that the good-natured, yet discerning spectators, were painfully divided between their sense of comic absurdity, and a feeling of shame for one who could feel nothing for herself.

One by one the ladies dropped off—Miss Somers went out of the room for a few minutes to alter her dress, as it was the custom of the family, before dinner. She left a port-folio of pretty drawings and good prints, for Miss Barbara's amusement; but Miss Barbara's thoughts were so intent upon the harper's ball that she could not be entertained with such *trifles*.

How unhappy are those who spend their time in expectation! They can never enjoy the present.

Whilst Barbara was contriving means of interesting Miss Somers in her favour,

she recollected, with surprise, that not one word had yet been said of her present of the Guinea-hen.

Mrs. Betty, in the hurry of her dressing her young lady in the morning, had forgotten it, but it came just whilst Miss Somers was dressing, and the housekeeper came into her mistress's room to announce its arrival.

"Ma'am," said she, "here's a beautiful Guinea-hen just come, *with* Miss Barbara Case's compliments to you."

Miss Somers knew, by the tone in which the housekeeper delivered this message, that there was something in the business, which did not perfectly please her. She made no answer, in expectation that the housekeeper, who was a woman of a very open temper, would explain her cause of dissatisfaction.—In this she was not mistaken: the house-

keeper came close up to the dressing-table, and continued, "I never like to speak till I'm sure, ma'am, and I'm not quite sure, to say certain, in this case, ma'am, but still I think it right to tell you, which can't wrong any body, what came across my mind about this same Guinea-hen, ma'am, and you can inquire into it, and do as you please afterwards, ma'am. Some time ago we had fine Guinea-fowls of our own, and I made bold, not thinking, to be sure, that all our own would die away from us, as they have done, to give a fine couple last Christmas to Susan Price, and very fond and pleased she was at the time, and I'm sure would never have parted with the hen with her good-will; but if my eyes don't strangely mistake, this hen, that comes from Miss Barbara, is the self-same iden-

tical Guinea-hen that I gave to Susan. And how Miss Bab came by it, is the thing that puzzles me. If my boy Philip was at home, may be, as he's often at Mrs. Price's (which I don't disapprove), he might know the history of the Guinea-hen. I expect him home this night, and, if you have no objection, I will sift the affair."

"The shortest way, I should think," said Henrietta, "would be to ask Miss Case herself about it, which I will do this evening."

"If you please ma'am," said the housekeeper, coldly, for she knew that Miss Barbara was not famous in the village for speaking the truth.

Dinner was now served.—Attorney Case expected to smell mint-sauce, and as the covers were taken from off the dishes, looked around for lamb — but

no lamb appeared.—He had a dexterous knack of twisting the conversation to his point.

Sir Arthur was speaking, when they sat down to dinner, of a new carving-knife, which he lately had had made for his sister; the attorney immediately went from carving-knives to poultry, thence to butcher's meat: some joints, he observed, were much more difficult to carve than others; he never saw a man carve better than the gentleman opposite him, who was the curate of the parish. "But, sir," said the vulgar attorney, "I must make bold to differ with you in one point, and I'll appeal to Sir Arthur. Sir Arthur, pray, may I ask, when you carve a fore-quarter of lamb, do you, when you raise the shoulder, throw in salt or not?"

This well-prepared question was not

lost upon Sir Arthur; the attorney was thanked for his intended present, but mortified and surprised, to hear Sir Arthur say, that it was a constant rule of his never to accept of any presents from his neighbours. "If we were to accept a lamb from a rich neighbour on my estate," said he, "I am afraid we should mortify many of our poor tenants, who can have little to offer, though, perhaps, they may bear us thorough good-will notwithstanding."

After the ladies left the dining-room, as they were walking up and down the large hall, Miss Barbara had a fair opportunity of imitating her keen father's method of conversing. One of the ladies observed, that this hall would be a charming place for music—Bab brought in harps, and harpers, and the harpers' ball, in a breath.—"I know

so much about it, about the ball I mean," said she, "because a lady in Shrewsbury, a friend of papa's, offered to take me with her, but papa did not like to give her the trouble of sending so far for me, though she has a coach of her own."

Barbara fixed her eyes upon Miss Somers, as she spoke, but she could not read her countenance as distinctly as she wished, because Miss Somers was at this moment letting down the veil of her hat.

"Shall we walk out before tea?" said she to her companions. "I have a pretty Guinea-hen to show you."

Barbara, secretly drawing propitious omens from the Guinea-hen, followed with a confidential step.

The pheasantry was well filled with pheasants, peacocks, &c. and Susan's

pretty little Guinea-hen appeared well, even in this high company—it was much admired. Barbara was in glory—but her glory was of short duration. Just as Miss Somers was going to inquire into the Guinea-hen's history, Philip came up, to ask permission to have a bit of sycamore, to turn a nutmeg-box for his mother.

Philip was an ingenious lad, and a good turner for his age; Sir Arthur had put by a bit of sycamore on purpose for him, and Miss Somers told him where it was to be found. He thanked her, but in the midst of his bow of thanks his eye was struck by the sight of the Guinea-hen, and he involuntarily exclaimed, "Susan's Guinea-hen, I declare!"

"No, it's not Susan's Guinea-hen," said Miss Barbara, colouring furiously.

"It is mine, and I've made a present of it to Miss Somers."

At the sound of Bab's voice Philip turned—saw her—and indignation, unrestrained by the presence of all the amazed spectators, flashed in his countenance.

"What is the matter, Philip?" said Miss Somers, in a pacifying tone;—but Philip was not inclined to be pacified.

"Why, ma'am," said he, "may I speak out?" and, without waiting for permission, he spoke out, and gave a full, true, and warm account of Rose's embassy, and of Miss Barbara's cruel and avaricious proceedings.

Barbara denied, prevaricated, stammered, and at last was overcome with confusion, for which even the most indulgent spectators could scarcely pity her.

Miss Somers, however, mindful of what was due to her guest, was anxious to dispatch Philip for his piece of sycamore.

Bab recovered herself as soon as he was out of sight; but she further exposed herself by exclaiming, "I'm sure I wish this pitiful Guinea-hen had never come into my possession. I wish Susan had kept it at home, as she should have done!"

"Perhaps she will be more careful, now that she has received so strong a lesson," said Miss Somers. "Shall we try her?" continued she; "Philip will, I dare say, take the Guinea hen back to Susan, if we desire it."

"If you please ma'am," said Barbara, sullenly; "I have nothing more to do with it."

So the Guinea-hen was delivered to

Philip, who set off joyfully with his prize, and was soon in sight of farmer Price's cottage.

He stopped when he came to the door; he recollected Rose, and her generous friendship for Susan; he was determined, that she should have the pleasure of restoring the Guinea-hen; he ran into the village: all the children who had given up their little purse on May-day, were assembled on the play-green; they were delighted to see the Guinea-hen once more—Philip took his pipe and tabor, and they marched in innocent triumph towards the white-washed cottage.

"Let me come with you—let me come with you," said the butcher's boy to Philip. "Stop one minute! my father has something to say to you."

He darted into his father's house. The little procession stopped, and in a few

minutes the bleating of a lamb was heard. Through a back passage which led into the paddock behind the house, they saw the butcher leading a lamb.

"It is Daisy," exclaimed Rose—"It's Daisy!" repeated all her companions. "Susan's lamb! Susan's lamb!" and there was a universal shout of joy.

"Well, for my part," said the good butcher, as soon as he could be heard, "for my part I would not be so cruel as Attorney Case for the whole world.—These poor brute-beasts don't know aforehand what's going to happen to them; and as for dying, it's what we must all do some time or another; but to keep wringing the hearts of the living, that have as much sense as one's self, is what I call cruel; and is not this what Attorney Case has

been doing by poor Susan, and her whole family, ever since he took a spite against them? But, at any rate, here's Susan's lamb safe and sound; I'd have taken it back sooner, but I was off before day to the fair, and am but just come back; however, Daisy has been as well off in my paddock, as he would have been in the field by the water-side."

The obliging shopkeeper, who showed the pretty calicoes to Susan, was now at his door; and when he saw the lamb, heard that it was Susan's, and learnt its history, he said that he would add his mite, and he gave the children some ends of narrow riband, with which Rose decorated her friend's lamb.

The pipe and tabor now once more began to play, and the procession moved on in joyful order, after giving the

humane butcher three cheers—three cheers which were better deserved, than "loud huzzas" usually are.

Susan was working in her arbour, with her little deal table before her; when she heard the sound of the music; she put down her work and listened; she saw the crowd of children coming nearer and nearer; they had closed round Daisy, so that she did not see it, but as they came up to the garden-gate she saw Rose beckon to her.—Philip played as loud as he could, that she might not hear, till the proper moment, the bleating of the lamb.

Susan opened the garden-wicket, and at this signal the crowd divided, and the first thing that Susan saw in the midst of her taller friends was little smiling Mary, with the Guinea-hen in her arms.

"Come on! come on!" cried Mary as Susan started with joyful surprise, "you have more to see."

At this instant the music paused; Susan heard the bleating of a lamb, and scarcely daring to believe her senses, she pressed eagerly forward, and beheld poor Daisy!—she burst into tears.

"I did not shed one tear when I parted with you, my dear little Daisy!" said she; "it was for my father and mother; I would not have parted with you for any thing else in the whole world.—Thank you, thank you all," added she to her companions, who sympathised in her joy, even more than they had sympathised in her sorrow.—"Now if my father was not to go away from us next week, and if my mother was quite stout, I should be the happiest person in the world!"

As Susan pronounced these words, a voice behind the little listening crowd cried, in a brutal tone, "Let us pass, "if you please, you have no right to "stop up the public road!" This was the voice of Attorney Case, who was returning with his daughter Barbara from his visit to the Abbey.—He saw the lamb, and tried to whistle as he passed on; Barbara also saw the Guinea-hen, and turned her head another way, that she might avoid the contemptuous, reproachful looks of those whom she only affected to despise. Even her new bonnet, in which she had expected to be so much admired, was now only serviceable to hide her face, and conceal her mortification.

"I am glad she saw the Guinea-hen," cried Rose, who now held it in her hands.

"Yes," said Philip, "she'll not forget May-day in a hurry."

"Nor I neither, I hope," said Susan, looking round upon her companions with a most affectionate smile: "I hope, whilst I live, I shall never forget your goodness to me last May-day. Now I've my pretty Guinea-hen safe once more, I should think of returning your money."

"No! no! no!" was the general cry. "We don't want the money—keep it, keep it—you want it for your father."

"Well," said Susan, "I am not too proud to be obliged. I *will* keep your money for my father. Perhaps some time or other I may be able to earn—"

"Oh," interrupted Philip, "don't let us talk of earning, don't let us talk to her of money now; she has not had time

hardly to look at poor Daisy and her Guinea-hen.—Come, we had best go about our business, and let her have them all to herself."

The crowd moved away in consequence of Philip's considerate advice; but it was observed, that he was the very last to stir from the garden-wicket himself. He staid, first, to inform Susan, that it was Rose who tied the ribands on Daisy's head; then he staid a little longer to let her into the history of the Guinea-hen, and to tell her who it was that brought the hen home from the Abbey.

Rose held the sieve, and Susan was feeding her long-lost favourite, whilst Philip leaned over the wicket prolonging his narration.

"Now, my pretty Guinea-hen, my naughty Guinea-hen, that flew away

from me, you shall never serve me so again—I must cut your nice wings, but I won't hurt you."

"Take care," cried Philip, "you'd better, indeed you'd better let me hold her, whilst you cut her wings."

When this operation was successfully performed, which it certainly could never have been, if Philip had not held the hen for Susan, he recollected that his mother had sent him with a message to Mrs. Price.

This message led to another quarter of an hour's delay, for he had the whole history of the Guinea-hen to tell over again to Mrs. Price; and the farmer himself luckily came in whilst it was going on, so it was but civil to begin it afresh; and then the farmer was so rejoiced to see his Susan so happy again with her two little favourites, that he de-

clared he must see Daisy fed himself, and Philip found that he was wanted to hold the jug full of milk, out of which Farmer Price filled the pan for Daisy! happy Daisy! who lapped at his ease, whilst Susan caressed him, and thanked her fond father and her pleased mother.

"But, Philip," said Mrs. Price, "I'll hold the jug—you'll be late with your message to your mother; we'll not detain you any longer."

Philip departed, and as he went out of the garden-wicket he looked up, and saw Bab and her maid Betty staring out of the window, as usual; on this he immediately turned back to try whether he had shut the gate fast, lest the Guinea-hen might stray out, and fall again into the hands of the enemy.

Miss Barbara, in the course of this day, had felt considerable mortification,

but no contrition. She was vexed that her meanness was discovered, but she felt no desire to cure herself of any of her faults. The ball was still uppermost in her vain selfish soul.

"Well," said she, to her confidante Betty, "you hear how things have turned out; but if Miss Somers won't think of asking me to go with her, I've a notion I know who will.—As papa says, it's a good thing to have two strings to one's bow."

Now, some officers, who were quartered at Shrewsbury, had become acquainted with Mr. Case; they had gotten into some quarrel with a tradesman in the town, and Attorney Case had promised to bring them through the affair, as the man threatened to take the law of them. Upon the faith of this promise, and with the vain hope, that

by civility they might dispose him to bring in a *reasonable* bill of costs, these officers sometimes invited Mr. Case to the mess; and one of them, who had lately been married, prevailed upon his bride *sometimes* to take a little notice of Miss Barbara. It was with this lady, that Miss Barbara now hoped to go to the harpers' ball.

"The officers and Mrs. Strathspey, or more properly Mrs. Strathspey and the officers, are to breakfast here to-morrow, do you know," said Bab to Betty.—"One of them dined at the Abbey to day, and told papa, they'd all come; they are going out, on a party, somewhere into the country, and breakfast here in their way.—Pray, Betty, don't forget that Mrs. Strathspey can't breakfast without honey; I heard her say so myself."

"Then indeed," said Betty, "I'm afraid Mrs. Strathspey will be likely to go without her breakfast here, for not a spoonful of honey have we, let her long for it ever so much."

"But, surely," said Bab, "we can contrive to get some honey in the neighbourhood."

"There's none to be bought, as I know of," said Betty.

"But is there none to be begged or borrowed?" said Bab, laughing. "Do you forget Susan's bee-hive? Step over to her in the morning, with *my compliments*, and see what you can do—tell her it is for Mrs. Strathspey."

In the morning Betty went with Miss Barbara's compliments to Susan, to beg some honey for Mrs. Strathspey, who could not breakfast without it.

Susan did not like to part with her

honey, because her mother loved it, and she therefore gave Betty but a small quantity: when Barbara saw how little Susan sent, she called her *a miser*, and said she *must* have some more for Mrs. Strathspey.

"I'll go myself and speak to her; come you with me, Betty," said the young lady, who found it at present convenient to forget her having declared, the day that she sucked up the broth, that she never would honour Susan with another visit.

"Susan," said she, accosting the poor girl, whom she had done every thing in her power to injure, "I must beg a little more honey from you for Mrs. Strathspey's breakfast. You know, on a particular occasion, such as this, neighbours must help one another."

"To be sure they should," added Betty.

Susan, though she was generous, was not weak; she was willing to give to those she loved, but not disposed to let any thing be taken from her, or coaxed out of her, by those she had reason to despise. She civilly answered, that she was sorry she had no more honey to spare. Barbara grew angry, and lost all command of herself, when she saw that Susan, without regarding her reproaches, went on looking through the glass pane in the bee-hive.—“ I'll tell you what, Susan Price,” said she, in a high tone, “the honey I *will* have, so you may as well give it to me by fair means.—Yes or no?—Speak! will you give it me or not? will you give me that piece of the honey-comb that lies there?”

“ That bit of honey-comb is for my mother's breakfast,” said Susan; “ I cannot give it you.”

"Can't you!" said Bab; "then see if I don't get it."

She stretched across Susan for the honey-comb, which was lying by some rosemary-leaves, that Susan had freshly gathered for her mother's tea. Bab grasped, but at her first effort she reached only the rosemary; she made a second dart at the honey-comb, and in her struggle to obtain it, she overset the bee-hive. The bees swarmed about her—her maid Betty screamed, and ran away. Susan, who was sheltered by a laburnum-tree, called to Barbara, upon whom the black clusters of bees were now settling, and begged her to stand still, and not to beat them away. "If you stand quietly, you won't be stung perhaps." But instead of standing quietly, Bab buffetted, and stamped, and roared, and the bees stung her ter-

ribly; her arms and her face swelled in a frightful manner. She was helped home by poor Susan, and treacherous Mrs. Betty, who, now the mischief was done, thought only of exculpating herself to her master.

"Indeed, Miss Barbara," said she, "this was quite wrong of you, to go and yet yourself into such a scrape. I shall be turned away for it, you'll see."

"I don't care whether you are turned away or not," said Barbara, "I never felt such pain in my life. Can't you do something for me? I don't mind the pain either, so much as being such a fright. Pray, how am I to be fit to be seen at breakfast by Mrs. Strathspey? and I suppose I can't go to the ball either, to morrow, after all!"

"No, that you can't expect to do, indeed," said Betty the comforter. "You

need not think of balls, for those lumps and swellings won't go off your face this week.—That's not what pains me, but I'm thinking of what your papa will say to me, when he sees you, miss.

Whilst this amiable mistress and maid were in their adversity, reviling one another, Susan, when she saw that she could be of no farther use, was preparing to depart, but at the house-door she was met by Mr. Case.

Mr. Case had revolved things in his mind, for his second visit at the Abbey pleased him as little as his first, from a few words Sir Arthur and Miss Somers dropped in speaking of Susan and Farmer Price. Mr. Case began to fear, that he had mistaken his game in quarrelling with this family. The refusal of his present dwelt upon the attorney's mind, and he was aware, that if the history of

Susan's lamb ever reached the Abbey, he was undone; he now thought, that the most prudent course he could possibly follow would be, to *hush up* matters with the *Prices* with all convenient speed. Consequently, when he met Susan at his door, he forced a gracious smile.

"How is your mother, Susan?" said he. "Is there any thing in our house can be of service to her? I'm glad to see you here. Barbara! Barbara! Bab!" cried he; "come down stairs, child, and speak to Susan Price." And, as no Barbara answered, her father stalked up stairs directly, opened the door, and stood amazed at the spectacle of her swelled visage.

Betty instantly began to tell the story her own way. Bab contradicted her as fast as she spoke. The attorney turned the maid away upon the spot;

and partly with real anger, and partly with politic affectation of anger, he demanded from his daughter, how she dared to treat Susan Price so ill: " When she was so neighbourly and obliging as to give you some of her honey, couldn't you be content without seizing upon the honey-comb by force? This is scandalous behaviour, and what, I assure you, I can't countenance."

Susan now interceded for Barbara; and the attorney, softening his voice, said that Susan was a great deal too good to her, " as indeed you are, Susan," added he, " to every body. I forgive her for your sake."

Susan courtesied, in great surprise, but her lamb could not be forgotten; and she left the attorney's house as soon as she could, to make her mother's rosemary-tea for breakfast.

Mr. Case saw, that Susan was not so simple as to be taken in by a few fair words. His next attempt was to conciliate Farmer Price; the farmer was a blunt, honest man, and his countenance remained inflexibly contemptuous, when the attorney addressed him in his softest tone.

So stood matters the day of the long-expected harpers' ball.—Miss Barbara Case, stung by Susan's bees, could not, after all her manœuvres, go with Mrs. Strathspey to the ball.

The ball-room was filled early in the evening; there was a numerous assembly; the harpers, who contended for the prize, were placed under the music-gallery at the lower end of the room; amongst them was our old blind friend, who, as he was not so well clad as his competitors, seemed to be disdained by

many of the spectators.—Six ladies and six gentlemen were now appointed, to be judges of the performance. They were seated in a semicircle, opposite to the harpers. The Miss Somerses, who were fond of music, were amongst the ladies in the semicircle, and the prize was lodged in the hands of Sir Arthur. There was now silence. The first harp sounded, and as each musician tried his skill, the audience seemed to think, that each deserved the prize. The old blind man was the last; he tuned his instrument, and such a simple pathetic strain was heard as touched every heart. All were fixed in delighted attention, and when the music ceased, the silence for some moments continued.—The silence was followed by an universal buzz of applause. The judges were unanimous in their opinions, and it was

declared, that the old blind harper, who played the last, deserved the prize.

The simple, pathetic air, which won the suffrages of the whole assembly, was his own composition; he was pressed to give the words belonging to the music, and at last he modestly offered to repeat them, as he could not see to write. Miss Somers's ready pencil was instantly produced, and the old harper dictated the words of his ballad, which he called, "*Susan's Lamentation for her Lamb.*"

Miss Somers looked at her brother from time to time, as she wrote; and Sir Arthur, as soon as the old man had finished, took him aside and asked him some questions, which brought the whole history of Susan's lamb, and of Attorney Case's cruelty, to light.

The attorney himself was present,

when the harper began to dictate his ballad; his colour, as Sir Arthur steadily looked at him, varied continually; till at length, when he heard the words, "Susan's Lamentation for her Lamb," he suddenly shrank back, sculked through the crowd, and disappeared. We shall not follow him, we had rather follow our old friend, the victorious harper.

No sooner had he received the ten guineas, his well-merited prize, than he retired into a small room belonging to the people of the house, asked for pen, ink, and paper, and dictated, in a low voice, to his boy, who was a tolerably good scribe, a letter, which he ordered him to put directly into the Shrewsbury post-office; the boy ran with the letter to the post-office; he was but just in time, for the postman's horn was sounding.

The next morning, when Farmer Price, his wife, and Susan, were sitting together, reflecting that his week's leave of absence was nearly at an end, and that the money was not yet made up for John Simpson, the substitute, a knock was heard at the door, and the person, who usually delivered the letters in the village, put a letter into Susan's hand, saying, "A penny, if you please—here's a letter for your father."

"For me!" said Farmer Price, "here's the penny then; but who can it be from, I wonder; who can think of writing to me, in this world?" He tore open the letter, but the hard name at the bottom of the page puzzled him—"*your obliged friend*—Llewellyn." "And what's this?" said he, opening a paper that was enclosed in the letter; "it's a song, seemingly; it must be

somebody that has a mind to make an April-fool of me."

"But it is not April, it is May, father," said Susan,

"Well, let us read the letter, and we shall come at the truth—all in good time."

Farmer Price sat down in his own chair, for he could not read entirely to his satisfaction in any other, and read as follows:

"My worthy friend,

"I am sure you will be glad to hear, that I have had good success this night. I have won the ten-guinea prize, and for that I am in a great measure indebted to your sweet daughter Susan, as you will see by a little ballad I enclose for her.—Your hospitality to me has afforded me an opportunity of learning some of your family-history. You do

not, I hope, forget, that I was present, when you were counting the treasure in Susan's little purse, and that I heard for what purpose it was all destined.—You have not, I know, yet made up the full sum for your substitute, John Simpson, therefore do me the favour to use the five-guinea bank-note, which you will find within the ballad. You shall not find me as hard a creditor as Attorney Case. Pay me the money at your own convenience; if it is never convenient to you to pay it, I shall never ask it. I shall go my rounds again through this country, I believe, about this time next year, and will call to see how you do, and to play the new tune for Susan and the dear little boys.

"I should just add, to set your heart at rest about the money, that it does not distress me at all to lend it to you:

I am not quite so poor as I appear to be; but it is my humour to go about as I do. I see more of the world under my tattered garb than, perhaps, I should ever see in a better dress. There are many of my profession, who are of the same mind as myself, in this respect; and we are glad, when it lies in our way, to do any kindness to such a worthy family as yours —So fare ye well,

"Your obliged friend,

"LLEWELLYN."

Susan now, by her father's desire, opened the ballad: he picked up the five-guinea bank-note, whilst she read with surprise, "Susan's Lamentation for her Lamb." Her mother leaned over her shoulder to read the words, but they were interrupted, before they had finished the first stanza, by another knock at the door. It was not the postman

with another letter: it was Sir Arthur and his sisters.

They came with an intention, which they were much disappointed to find that the old harper had rendered vain—they came to lend the farmer and his good family the money, to pay for his substitute.

"But, since we are here," said Sir Arthur, "let me do my own business, which I had like to have forgotten. Mr. Price, will you come out with me, and let me show you a piece of your land, through which I want to make a road. Look there," said Sir Arthur, pointing to the spot, "I am laying out a ride round my estate, and that bit of land of yours stops me."

"Why, so, sir?" said Price: "the land's mine, to be sure, for that matter; but I hope you don't look upon me to

be that sort of person, that would be stiff about a trifle, or so."

"Why," said Sir Arthur, "I had heard you were a litigious, pig-headed fellow; but you do not seem to deserve this character."

"Hope not, sir," said the farmer; "but about the matter of the land, I don't want to make no advantage of your wishing for it: you are welcome to it, and I leave it to you to find me out another bit of land convenient to me, that will be worth neither more nor less, or else to make up the value to me some way or other. I need say no more about it."

"I hear something," continued Sir Arthur, after a short silence, "I hear something, Mr. Price, of *a flaw* in your lease. I would not speak to you of it whilst we were bargaining about

your land, lest I should over-awe you; but tell me what is this *flaw?*"

"In truth, and the truth is the fittest thing to be spoken at all times," said the farmer, "I didn't know myself what *a flaw*, as they call it, meant, till I heard of the word from Attorney Case; and I take it, *a flaw* is neither more nor less than a mistake, as one should say; now by reason a man does not make a mistake on purpose, it seems to me to be the fair thing, that if a man finds out his mistake, he might set it right; but Attorney Case says, this is not law, and I've no more to say. The man who drew up my lease made a mistake, and if I must suffer for it I must," said the farmer. "However I can show you, Sir Arthur, just for my own satisfaction and yours, a few lines of a memorandum on a slip of paper, which

was given me by your relation, the gentleman who lived here before, and let me my farm. You'll see, by that bit of paper, what was meant; but the attorney says, the paper's not worth a button in a court of justice, and I don't understand these things. All I understand is the common honesty of the matter. I've no more to say."

"This attorney, whom you speak of so often," said Sir Arthur, "you seem to have some quarrel with him. Now, would you tell me frankly, what is the matter between——"

"The matter between us then," said Price, "is a little bit of ground, not worth much, that there is open to the lane at the end of Mr. Case's garden, sir, and he wanted to take it in. Now, I told him my mind, that it belonged to the parish, and that I never would will-

ingly give my consent to his cribbing it in that way. Sir, I was the more loath to see it shut into his garden, which moreover is large enow of all conscience without it, because you must know, Sir Arthur, the children in our village are fond of making a little play-green of it, and they have a custom of meeting on May-day at a hawthorn that stands in the middle of it, and altogether I was very loath to see'em turned out of it by those who had no right."

"Let us go and see this nook," said Sir Arthur; "it is not far off, is it?"

"Oh no, sir, just hard-by here."

When they got to the ground, Mr. Case, who saw them walking together, was in a hurry to join them, that he might put a stop to any explanations. Explanations were things of which he had a great dread, but fortunately

he was upon this occasion a little too late.

"Is this the nook in dispute?" said Sir Arthur.

"Yes; this is the whole thing," said Price.

"Why, Sir Arthur, don't let us talk any more about it," said the politic attorney, with an assumed air of generosity; "let it belong to whom it will, I give it up to you."

"So great a lawyer, Mr. Case, as you are," replied Sir Arthur, "must know, that a man cannot give up that to which he has no legal title; and in this case, it is impossible that, with the best intentions to oblige me in the world, you can give up this bit of land to me, because it is mine already, as I can convince you effectually, by a map of the adjoining land, which I have for-

tunately safe amongst my papers. This piece of ground belonged to the farm on the opposite side of the road, and it was cut off when the lane was made."

"Very possibly; I dare say you are quite correct; you must know best," said the attorney, trembling for the agency.

"Then," said Sir Arthur, "Mr. Price, you will observe, that I now promise this little green to the children, for a play-ground, and I hope they may gather hawthorn many a May-day at this their favourite bush."

Mr. Price bowed low, which he seldom did, even when he received a favour himself.

"And now, Mr. Case," said Sir Arthur, turning to the attorney, who did not know which way to look, "you sent me a lease to look over."

"Ye—ye—yes," stammered Mr. Case. "I thought it my duty to do so, not out of any malice or ill-will to this good man."

"You have done him no injury," said Sir Arthur coolly.—"I am ready to make him a new lease, whenever he pleases, of his farm; and I shall be guided by a memorandum of the original bargain, which he has in his possession. I hope I never shall take an unfair advantage of any one."

"Heaven forbid, sir," said the attorney, sanctifying his face, "that I should suggest the taking an *unfair* advantage of any man, rich or poor—but to break a bad lease, is not taking an unfair advantage."

"You really think so?" said Sir Arthur.

"Certainly I do, and I hope I have not hazarded your good opinion, by

speaking my mind concerning the flaw so plainly. I always understood, that there could be nothing ungentleman-like in the way of business, in taking advantage of a flaw in a lease."

"Now," said Sir Arthur, "you have pronounced judgment, *undesignedly*, in your own case.—You intended to send me this poor man's lease, but your son, by some mistake, brought me your own, and I have discovered a fatal error in it."

"A fatal error!" said the alarmed attorney.

"Yes, sir," said Sir Arthur, pulling the lease out of his pocket; "here it is—you will observe, that it is neither signed nor sealed by the grantor."

"But you won't take advantage of me surely, Sir Arthur," said Mr. Case, forgetting his own principles.

"I shall not take advantage of you as you would have taken of this honest man. In both cases I shall be guided by memorandums which I have in my possession. I shall not, Mr. Case, defraud you of one shilling of your property. I am ready, at a fair valuation, to pay the exact value of your house and land, but, upon this condition, that you quit the parish within one month."

Attorney Case submitted, for he knew that he could not legally resist.—He was glad to be let off so easily, and he bowed, and sneaked away, secretly comforting himself with the hope, that when they came to the valuation of the house and land, he should be the gainer, perhaps, of a few guineas; his reputation he justly held very cheap.

"You are a scholar, you write a good

hand, you can keep accounts, cannot you?" said Sir Arthur to Mr. Price, as they walked home towards his cottage. "I think I saw a bill of your little daughter's drawing-out the other day, which was very neatly written. Did you teach her to write?"

"No, sir," said Price, "I can't say I did *that*, for she mostly taught it herself; but I taught her a little arithmetic, as far as I knew, on our winter nights, when I had nothing better to do."

"Your daughter shows that she has been well taught," said Sir Arthur, "and her good conduct and good character speak strongly in favour of her parents."

"You are very good, very good indeed, sir, to speak in this sort of way," said the delighted father.

"But I mean to do more than *pay you with words*, said Sir Arthur. "You are attached to your own family: perhaps you may become attached to me, when you come to know me, and we shall have frequent opportunities of judging of one another. I want no agent to squeeze my tenants, or to do my dirty work. I only want a steady, intelligent, honest man, like you, to collect my rents, and I hope, Mr. Price, you will have no objection to the employment."

"I hope, sir," said Price, with joy and gratitude glowing in his honest countenance, "that you'll never have no cause to repent your goodness."

"And what are my sisters about here?" said Sir Arthur, entering the cottage, and going behind his sisters,

who were busily engaged in measuring an extremely pretty-coloured calico.

"It is for Susan! my dear brother," said they.

"I knew she did not keep that guinea for herself," said Miss Somers; "I have just prevailed upon her mother, to tell me what became of it. Susan gave it to her father—but she must not refuse a gown of our choosing this time, and I am sure she will not, because her mother, I see, likes it.—And Susan, I hear, that, instead of being Queen of the May this year, you were sitting in your sick mother's room. Your mother has a little colour in her cheeks now."

"Oh, ma'am," interrupted Mrs. Price, "I'm quite well—joy, I think has made me quite well.'

"Then," said Miss Somers, "I hope you will be able to come out on your daughter's birth-day, which I hear is the 25th of this month.—Make haste and get quite well before that day, for my brother intends that all the lads and lasses of the village shall have a dance on Susan's birth-day."

"Yes," said Sir Arthur; "and I hope, on that day, Susan, you will be very happy with your little friends upon their play-green. I shall tell them, that it is your good conduct which has obtained it for them; and if you have any thing to ask, any little favour for any of your companions, which we can grant, now ask, Susan; these ladies look as if they would not refuse you any thing that is reasonable; and I think

you look as if you would not ask any thing unreasonable."

"Sir," said Susan, after consulting her mother's eyes, "there is, to be sure, a favour I should like to ask; it is for Rose."

"Well, I don't know who Rose is," said Sir Arthur, smiling; "but go on."

"Ma'am, you have seen her, I believe; she is a very good girl indeed," said Mrs. Price.

"And works very neatly indeed," continued Susan, eagerly, to Miss Somers; "and she and her mother heard you were looking out for one to wait upon you."

"Say no more," said Miss Somers, "your wish is granted; tell Rose to come to the Abbey to-morrow morning,

or rather come with her yourself, for our housekeeper, I know, wants to talk to you about a certain cake. She wishes, Susan, that you should be the maker of the cake for the dance, and she has good things ready looked out for it already, I know. It must be large enough for every body to have a slice, and the housekeeper will slice it for you. I only hope your cake will be as good as your bread.—Fare ye well."

How happy are those who bid farewell to a whole family, silent with gratitude, who will bless them aloud when they are far out of hearing!

"How do I wish, now," said Farmer Price, "and it's almost a sin for one, that has had such a power of favours done him, to wish for any thing more; but how I *do* wish, wife, that our good

friend the harper, Susan, was only here at this time being, it would do his old warm heart good. Well, the best of it is, we shall be able, next year, when he comes his rounds, to pay him his money with thanks, being all the time, and for ever, as much obliged to him as if we kept it, and wanted it as badly as we did when he gave it so handsome.—I long, so I do, to see him in this house again, drinking, as he did, just in this spot, a glass of Susan's mead, to her very good health."

"Yes," said Susan, "and the next time he comes, I can give him one of my Guinea-hen's eggs, and I shall show him my lamb Daisy."

"True, love," said her mother; "and he will play that tune, and sing

that pretty ballad—where is it, for I have not finished it?"

"Rose ran away with it, mother; and I'll step after her and bring it back to you this minute," said Susan.

Susan found her friend Rose at the hawthorn, in the midst of a crowded circle of her companions, to whom she was reading "Susan's Lamentation for her Lamb."

"The words are something—but the tune—the tune—I must have the tune," cried Philip. "I'll ask my mother, to ask Sir Arthur, to try and rout out which way that good old man went after the ball; and if he's above ground we'll have him back by Susan's birthday, and he shall sit here, just exactly here, by this our bush, and he shall

play—I mean if he pleases—that there tune for us; and I shall learn it—I mean if I can—in a minute."

The good news, that Farmer Price was to be employed to collect the rents, and that Attorney Case was to leave the parish in a month, soon spread over the village. Many came out of their houses to have the pleasure of hearing the joyful tidings confirmed by Susan herself; the crowd on the play-green increased every minute.

"Yes," cried the triumphant Philip, "I tell you it's all true, every word of it. Susan's too modest to say it herself—but I tell ye all, Sir Arthur gave us this play-green for ever, on account of her being so good."

You see, at last, Attorney Case, with all his cunning, has not proved a match for "Simple Susan."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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